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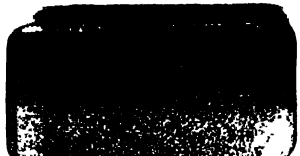

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THE VERMILION BOX

E. V. LUCAS

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By E. V. LUCAS

More Wanderings in London
Cloud and Silver
The Vermilion Box
The Hausfrau Rampant
Landmarks
Listener's Lure
Mr. Ingleside
Over Bemerton's
Loiterer's Harvest
One Day and Another
Fireside and Sunshine
Character and Comedy
Old Lamps for New
The Hambledon Men
The Open Road
The Friendly Town
Her Infinite Variety—
Good Company—
The Gentlest Art
The Second Post
A Little of Everything
Harvest Home
Variety Lane
The Best of Lamb
The Life of Charles Lamb
A Swan and Her Friends
A Wanderer in Venice
A Wanderer in Paris
A Wanderer in London
A Wanderer in Holland
A Wanderer in Florence
Highways and Byways in Sussex
Anne's Terrible Good Nature
The Slowcoach

and

The Pocket Edition of the Works of Charles Lamb: I. Miscellaneous Prose; II. Elia; III. Children's Books; IV. Poems and Plays; V. and VI. Letters.

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THE VERMILION BOX

BY

E. V. LUCAS

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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In memory of

P. D. L.

who was wounded at Fricourt
on July 1, 1916, and died at
Abbeville on July 6

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TO THE READER

THE letters in this book, which throw some light on social England under the war, were written between the latter part of 1914 and 1916. I have selected only the more significant ones for publication.

Most of the correspondents are related to each other.

Mr. Richard Haven, who writes oftenest, is to-day (1916) a bachelor on the brink of fifty. He has a share in a conveyancing practice in Bedford Row and lives in that little creek at Knightsbridge called Mills Buildings.

Old Mrs. Haven, his mother, lives at Aylesbury, with her granddaughter, Anne Wiston, as companion. Mrs. Haven's four daughters, who are all married, are Kate, Joan, Helen, and Margaret.

Kate Haven married George Wiston, a coun-

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try brewer, much older than herself, who retired in 1912. Their children are Anne, born in 1890, and Olive, born in 1893. Olive became engaged to her cousin, Dick Bernal, in June, 1914. The Wistons live at Chislehurst.

George Wiston's sister Maude, now a widow, married a barrister named Clayton-Mills. They had a son, Archibald, born in 1884, who became an artist.

The second Miss Haven, Joan, married Theodore Lastways, of Pember & Lastways, stockbrokers, who died in 1909, leaving her very comfortably off. They had one daughter, Violet, born in 1892, and one son, John, born in 1898. Mrs. Lastways lives at Lancaster Gate.

Helen Haven married a soldier, now Lieut.-Col. Sir Vincent Starr, who is on the Staff. They had one son, Toby, born in 1895. Lady Starr lives near Shoreham in Kent.

Margaret Haven married Digby Bernal of the Record Office. Dick, their only son, was in the regular Army when the war broke out. Nancy, their only daughter, was born in 1894. They live on Campden Hill.

Digby Bernal's sister Ruth married in 1904 a

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young cavalry officer named Terence Derrick. They have two children, Bimbo and Teenie. Their home is at Minchinhampton.

Of the other people who write or receive letters—

Dr. Sutherland is an old friend of Richard Haven and is now a Unitarian minister in Brooklyn.

Barclay Vaughan is another old friend of Richard Haven and is now a Professor at Edinburgh.

Mrs. Park-Stanmer, the wife of a commanding officer stationed at Sandwich, was at school with Lady Starr.

Miss Hermione Huntresse was at school with Nancy Bernal.

Jerry Harding is the son of a Northumberland J.P. and a friend of Toby Starr.

E. V. L.

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THE VERMILION BOX

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THE VERMILION BOX

I

Lady Starr to Mrs. Haven

My dear Mother,—This war will be a great breaker-up of families. Mine has gone already, for Vincent left for France, where he has a staff appointment, yesterday, and Toby succeeded in finding a recruiting doctor to pass him to-day. I am really very proud of him, for he has refused to be deterred. The first three doctors all rejected him on account of his sight; but he stuck to it, and to-day chanced, somewhere in Westminster, on a less exacting official and got through. He has not the big-game motive at all, but really wants to do his duty by his country.

Oh dear! what a time is ahead for wives and mothers. My only Toby too! As Vincent said

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to me yesterday, "We should have had hundreds of children, my dear."

So now I must fling myself into Belgians and knitting and hope for the best.—Your loving

HELEN

II

MRS. HAVEN TO HER GRANDSON, TOBY STARR

MY DEAR TOBY,—I am greatly disappointed not to have had a visit from you, but I suppose you have had no time. I never thought to see a grandson of mine killing his fellow-men, and I think about it with grief day and night, but I am not going to trouble you with my perplexities; although I can't help saying that several Germans that I have known were quite harmless people, and Fräulein Schmidt, who taught your mother and her sisters German, often volunteered of her own free will to help with the flowers, etc., when we had visitors. And Mendelssohn's music, too, so sweet and serious! Why the Germans should have changed so, I can't think; but nothing is as

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it was, and it is more than time for us old folks to die.

Having asked several persons what is the best present for a young officer, and getting the same reply from all, I am sending you a periscope; and I hope you will make a point of always shooting through it. I also enclose a small cheque for anything else you may be wanting. God bless you, my dear boy.—Your affectionate, puzzled old

GRANNY

III

JOHN LASTWAYS, AT SCHOOL, TO MRS. LASTWAYS

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I am writing to say that you simply must let me enlist. Several fellows younger than me have not come back this term but have gone into the Public Schools Battalion, and I am bigger and look older than any of them; and you should just see my moustaches which I have been rubbing stuff on every night. I was told about it by Crosbie and wrote for a

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pot. It's called Depilator and makes the hair grow like blazes. Another thing is that I am stronger than Toby. One night I wrestled with him and threw him twice. If you say yes I shall go to the recruiting place at once and say I am eighteen. I enclose a telegraph form for your reply.—Your loving son JOHN

IV

MRS. LASTWAYS TO JOHN LASTWAYS

[*Telegram*]

Certainly not. Writing. MOTHER

V

MRS. LASTWAYS TO JOHN LASTWAYS

MY DEAR JOHN,—Your letter distressed me extremely, for it shows not only that you did not listen to the many things that I said to you on this question, but also that you have a very wrong

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idea of the importance of truth. War is very terrible and wicked; but it would become more so if we entered upon it with a falsehood; and we English must be more than ever careful after the way the Germans repudiated their treaty with Belgium. I think also you might try and put yourself in my place for a moment. You are my only son; that is to say, the only man I have to lean on. If you were old enough I should have to let you go; but until you are old enough I hope you will stand by me. We may, God knows, need each other's comfort only too deeply.
—Your loving MOTHER

VI

VIOLET LASTWAYS TO HER COUSIN, OLIVE WISTON

DEAR OLIVE,—It was very exciting here yesterday. Toby is staying with us before he goes into training, and yesterday his uniform came home, and we all helped him to try it on. He really looks very handsome in it, and when he

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has learnt what to do with his hands he will be quite natural. We wanted him to let us go out with him, but he was too shy; and so we watched him through the blinds as he crossed the street with his absurd stick. Some of them have dog whips, but his is a cane. It would be a wicked lie to say that he did not look self-conscious, poor boy, but then how could he help it?

Tell me where Dick is, and also if you have any plan of work during the war. I am meditating nursing. We might do something together.
—Yours, VI.

VII

Peter Raggett to His Friend, Toby Starr

Dear Old Sport,—We had a little dinner last night to drink your health. In barley water, I don't think. Jack was there, and the Goat, and old Hoskins, and Jumbo, and me; and we thought we should like to give you some old thing to remind you of us and be a bit of use in helping you both to save your own life and remove that of as many Huns as Heaven may send your way.

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Not that we are all so jolly flush—don't think that, I pray you. But you can tell that from the article itself, which is not precisely a pair of radium dumb-bells. Anyway it accompanies this letter and is the best kind of periscope I could find at the Stores; and we all wish you the best of luck and a big bag of Fritzes and Carls, and we wish we had your luck in getting a commission so soon. However, a time will come! So long!—Yours, PETER

VIII

FROM THE PERSONAL COLUMN

LONELY SUBALTERN would much appreciate correspondence. Box 06.

IX

FROM THE SAME COLUMN

SUBALTERN in uncongenial surroundings would be grateful for letters. Box 27.

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X

Toby Starr to His Mother, Lady Starr

My dear Mother,—If you see two advertisements in the *Times* from lonely subs asking for letters they belong to Jerry and me. We had a little dinner at the Piccadilly Grill to celebrate our commissions, and while we were talking he had the idea that it would be a lark to put those advertisements in just to see what kind of letters one gets. Whichever of us gets most in ten days after they appear troubles the other for a quid. If anything very funny comes along I shall send it to you.—Your loving Toby

XI

Digby Bernal to His Nephew, Toby Starr

My dear Toby,—I am glad you have your commission, and wish I was young enough myself. I do what I can in my old crock's way, and at present have to stand for hours every day outside

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a place where they make electric light, to guard it from Germans in our midst, although I have no notion how I could protect it if they came in any force. You may of course never get into action at all, for I can't think the war will last long. England, France, and Russia are too strong, and Bismarck always warned his country against taking on both France and Russia at once. By Christmas we shall all be happy again, I feel sure, or at any rate by next April.

Meanwhile, in case of accidents, I am sending you a periscope for the trenches, should you ever reach them. I have given one also to Dick.—Your affectionate uncle DIGBY BERNAL

XII

GEORGE WISTON TO HIS NEPHEW, TOBY STARR

MY DEAR TOBY,—I hear that you have become an officer, and in so far as it shows that you have pluck and patriotism, I am glad of it: but otherwise I cannot pretend to much satisfaction, for I am far from sanguine as to the task before us.

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Not only are the Germans a great purposeful people, with scientific order as their life-blood, but they have been preparing for years, while we have as consistently been neglecting warnings and rejoicing in our fool's paradise, in spite of great men like Lord Roberts. Personally I have done what I could, but it was a voice in the wilderness. France, of course, is effete, and I myself see very little hope for England. The best that can be expected is some kind of a stalemate.

Still we must all be as cheerful as we can and I must not discourage your enthusiasm, so it is with real pleasure that I send you a periscope for use in the trenches when you begin your work. —I am, yours cordially, GEORGE WISTON

XIII

LIEUT.-COL. SIR HECTOR RICARDO TO HIS GODSON, TOBY STARR

DEAR TOBY,—I am instructing Messrs. Boothroyd of Bond Street to despatch to you, by passenger train, carriage paid, the latest and best type

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of periscope for use in the trenches, because I am convinced that in the present kind of warfare, very different from that to which I was accustomed, no officer should be without one. If by any chance you get it broken or it is mislaid, at once let me know, and I will replace it. If you are hit, hand it to one of your companions.

I wish I was not on the shelf; but although the spirit is willing the flesh is woefully weak. I am riddled with rheumatism and gout. I hold that when one is too old one should admit it. Some of the "dug-outs," however, think otherwise —and not to the country's advantage!

If you would avoid my troubles when you are my age, be wise now and never touch red beef, take very little alcoholic stimulant, and give up sugar. All these things make for uric acid and unhappiness.—Your sincere friend,

HECTOR RICARDO

P.S.—When footsore it is a good plan to change socks. Whisky poured in the boots is also a help.

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XIV

Lady Starr to Toby Starr

My dearest Toby, Officer and Gentleman,—I don't know that I quite like your advertisement joke. There are so many nice people in the world ready, and especially just now, to do kind things, that you may take some of them in. Don't you see that you may get letters, written with great care and possibly at the sacrifice of time and even feeling to the writer, that might have gone to comfort and sustain young soldiers who really *are* lonely? Of course you couldn't think of all that the other night over your jolly little dinner; but if I were you I should not put the advertisement in any more.

There, I don't often preach to you, do I? You must forgive your very fond and rather-proud-of-her-son

Mother

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XV

Miss Anne Livesey (His Old Nurse) to Toby Starr

Dear Master Toby,—I can't bear to think of you going off to the front at this time of year, and you such a one to catch cold. I wish I could come with you to take care of you and see that you change your wet things, but that is not to be thought of. I should have knitted you something warm, only for the rheumatics in my hand, and so I am sending you instead something which my nephew, who is with the B.E.F., says that every soldier ought to have, and which I got the Vicar to get for me when he went to London. I am too old to understand such things, but they say you can see through this over the top of a trench without being seen yourself. Dear Master Toby, I shall pray for you every day; and don't forget to take plenty of camphor pillules with you for when you are chilled.—Yours respectfully

Anne Livesey

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XVI

Violet Lastways to Mrs. Haven

Dear Granny,—To-day I have been out with Toby collecting salutes. He is now more or less natural in his uniform and very proud of it. In fact he won't change it for anything. Just think, the particular Toby! It is most thrilling to see him being saluted, and he acknowledges it so nicely and not in the off-hand way that some of the officers do. It's such fun to see the men who are coming along getting their arms ready, and sometimes the poor dears have to let go their girls to do it. But now and then we met one who paid no attention to Toby at all, and I was furious, but Toby says it's not worth while doing anything about it. And there are all kinds of penalties if they are reported. Indeed I'm not sure that they can't be shot, but that perhaps is too much. Still, it's outrageous that they should be allowed to be so rude.

Toby goes off to-morrow to somewhere near Salisbury Plain. We shall miss him.

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Poor John is furious because he is under age. He went back to school like a thunder-cloud. It was very comic, but also rather tragic, to see his envy of Toby. Mother's point of view—John being her only son—never enters his head at all; but then of course he is very young and this is the most exciting thing that has ever happened in his life.

I am going to Paris very shortly to a hospital there. It has suddenly been decided. Until I go I am to spend two hours a day talking with a funny old Mademoiselle to try and get my French back. She is very puzzled by the English. "How fond you are," she said yesterday, "of making the wash of dirty clothes in public." Her father fell in the Franco-Prussian War, and she feels this new invasion doubly. It must be terrible to have the enemy occupying miles of one's own country.—Your loving VI.

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XVII

Mrs. Rickards to Box 06

You poor dear lonely Boy,—I want very much to write to you and to comfort you, but it is very difficult unless one knows more. Send me a line, however brief, to tell me who you are, where you come from, where you were at school, and what college at the University. I have three sons of my own, one of whom is in the Army, one in the Navy, and the other still at Eton. The eldest, who is in the Buffs, is, I am told, very popular and adored by his men. The second, on the *Indestructible*, is the pet of the mess. I send them illustrated papers every week, and would send some to you if you like. They both dote on "The Letters of Eve" in the *Tatler*. I wonder if you do too. And those bewitching ladies by Kirchner which used to be in *La Vie Parisienne*, they love those too and always want more. You are all naughty, you boys, I am afraid, but I love you for your bravery. Let me have a

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line in reply, and I will write and cheer you up again.—Yours sincerely,

BLANCHE RICKARDS

XVIII

MRS. THOMAS BURSLEM TO BOX 06

DEAR SIR,—I have often found great comfort during loneliness by guessing words. In the hope that you may be similarly relieved I send the following four words as a start:—

SARCINETA
ROLLEBATE
THEREINN
ALTARBEY

If you care to have more I will send them.—Yours truly, SARAH BURSLEM

XIX

MESSRS. NOGRASS & UNDERFOOT TO BOX 06

DEAR SIR,—We beg to bring to your notice the enclosed list of indoor games and pastimes,

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all of which are calculated to remove loneliness and relieve ennui. We would particularly call your attention to our miniature chess and draught boards for the trenches, with the chess men and draughts on little pegs to fit into sockets. We would also draw your attention to the new puzzle entitled "The Road to Potsdam," which has made many a dull hour pass rapidly and with roars of healthy laughter.

Postal orders or stamps must accompany all orders, which will be executed with promptness and dispatch.—Yours faithfully,

NOGRASS & UNDERFOOT

XX

MESSRS. NOGRASS & UNDERFOOT TO BOX 27

DEAR SIR,—We beg to bring to your notice the enclosed list of indoor games and pastimes, all of which are calculated to remove loneliness and relieve ennui. We would particularly call your attention to our miniature chess and draught boards for the trenches, with the chess men and

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draughts on little pegs to fit into sockets. We would also draw your attention to the new puzzle entitled "The Road to Potsdam," which has made many a dull hour pass rapidly and with roars of healthy laughter.

Postal orders or stamps must accompany all orders, which will be executed with promptness and despatch.—Yours faithfully.

NOGRASS & UNDERFOOT

XXI

MRS. PARK-STANMER TO BOX 27

DEAR BOX 27,—Such a lot of lonely subs. advertise for letters to-day that it is difficult which to choose. I decided on you because the number of your Box, 27, is the same as this house, where I am lodging to be near my husband, who is in command close by. I like to write to one lonely sub. every day, however busy I am, because I know how much it must mean to you, poor dears, to get a letter. But I always make it a condition

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that you reply. Tell me everything and then we shall get on famously.—Yours sincerely,

AMABEL PARK-STANMER

XXII

MR. COURTENAY FOLJAMBE TO BOX 06

MR. COURTENAY FOLJAMBE presents his compliments to the lonely subaltern whose letters are to be addressed to Box 06, and begs to enclose a copy of his latest poem on the war, in the hope that it may both stimulate and please him. Copies may be had of the author at threepence each.

(Verses entitled "Come, let us shoulder guns," dedicated by special permission to King Albert, enclosed.)

XXIII

MR. COURTENAY FOLJAMBE TO BOX 27

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(Verses entitled "Come, let us shoulder guns," dedicated by special permission to King Albert, enclosed.)

XXIV

Mrs. Silverton to Box 27

My dear Boy,—You must allow me to call you that because you are young and I am old. I know of course nothing about you—not even where you are, whether in England or abroad—but I want you to let me write to you just as if you were my own son, who was killed very soon after the war broke out. This will be a kind action on your part. My boy was twenty-one and he had just left Oxford and was about to enter his father's office; but being a very keen Territorial he was sent to France almost at once. In the hope that some of the things I had said to

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him may be of comfort and help to you—and from the fact that you say you are lonely, I feel that you cannot have too many friends—I am enclosing the letter which I was writing to him at the moment that the news of his death was brought to us.—Your sincere friend,

ANNE SILVERTON

P.S.—If you would care to write to me, my address is—Laurel Lodge, Chertsey Lane, Weybridge.

[*Enclosure*]

MY DEAREST SON,—Your letter gave your father and me much pleasure. I am glad that the boots keep out the water so thoroughly. Be careful what you drink out there. A little wine is safer than much of the water, I am told; but you know how unhappy we should be if you got into the way of taking too much; nor would it be fair either, for you belong now to your King, and he wants the best and clearest of your brains and all your strength, which he could not have if you drank in excess. I could have wished with all my heart that it had never been the business of my

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son to kill his fellow-men, but since force of arms seems to be, in the present state of the world's progress, the only way to right this terrible wrong that has come upon civilisation, I am glad to think that he laid aside all his private plans so readily to do his share, and I shall always be proud of him for it. And you were such a tender little boy too, and would often carry a spider or earwig to the window and throw it out rather than stamp on it. I am so glad that French time and English time are now the same, because I am going to say a little prayer for you at 8 every morning and 7 every evening, and if you are not too busy you will perhaps do the same for me, for we all need it. Your father is

XXV

Toby Starr to Mrs. Silverton

Dear Mrs. Silverton,—I want to apologise to you for not being quite straight. That advertisement of mine which brought your very kind letter and enclosure (which I return as being quite

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unworthy to keep it) was a kind of a joke, just to see how many letters would come and what kind of letters people wrote on these occasions. But your reply has knocked all the joke out of it and made me feel ashamed, and I have now done what I can to stop it.

If after this confession you still would like to write to me again, I wish you would; but to my camp as below. But I cannot really hope for that. Your son, I am sure, would never have done a thing like this, and it makes me the less worthy of your kindness.—I am, yours sincerely,

T. STARR (2nd Lieut.)

XXVI

TOBY STARR TO HIS MOTHER

MY DEAR MOTHER,—If you see an advertisement in the *Times* calling the lonely sub. business off you will know that it is mine. And I dare say Jerry will put one in too. You were quite right: one ought not to play such games. I ought to have been more sensible; but one can't think of

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everything at once—at least I can't—although one seems to think of everything in course of time, which is no use. I know I hadn't read two letters before I was jolly sick of the whole thing and blushing like a tomato; but I haven't any to send to you.

No more to-day, except very much love from

A. S. A. A. W. T.

P.S.—Those initials mean—a sadder and a wiser Toby. I am at Mrs. Wickenden's, Ivy Cottage, Amesbury. On velvet too, for there is a bathroom next to my bedroom. There is a lot of luck about billeting. Some fellows get only a garret and others sumptuous mansions with footmen.

XXVII

George Wiston to Richard Haven

Dear Richard,—I am so much concerned by the way things are going and the appalling cost of the war that I am beginning to save and con-

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ceal actual cash. For where should we be if the bank balances were called up? And they very likely will be. I have made a hole in the shrubbery in which I have buried with great care an iron box, and every day or so I add notes and coins to it. I am convinced that this is a necessary precaution. The country is heading straight for financial ruin, but I shall do my very best not to be brought down with it.—Yours cordially,

GEORGE WISTON

XXVIII

RICHARD HAVEN TO GEORGE WISTON

DEAR GEORGE,—I think you make the mistake of reading too many papers and hearing too much talk. When there is war on men like you should take to gardening and dig hard. Or do some recruiting. I always said you retired from business too soon.

The truth is that we are not a military nation and not a suspicious nation. Had we been either, or both, things would now be different, but also

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many of us would have emigrated to other countries long since. When a non-military nation is suddenly attacked by a nation that has been preparing for that war for generations, there are bound to be initial blunders. But give us time and we shall be all right. It is part of England's genius to begin wrong. Also it is our habit to win. Take my advice and throw yourself into something active and give your club a wide berth.
—Yours, R. H.

XXIX

Digby Bernal to Richard Haven

Dear Richard,—To-day's news seems to depress people, but it is only because they have not enough knowledge to enable them to read between the lines. What I admit must look to the uninitiated very like a reverse is really all part of Joffre's strategy, which takes count of checks as well as victories. By letting the enemy have this apparent advantage he will be all the more

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fitted, *when the time comes*, to deal him a vital blow.

By the way, I wonder if you have heard of this steady progress of Russian soldiers through England to the western front? It is wonderful the way we have managed it—all so secretly and efficiently. It takes old England to accomplish such feats as this. Some people still deny it, but I happen to be in the secret, through an influential friend. The Russian soldiers, thousands strong, have come from Archangel to Scotland, as I know for a fact.—Yours, D. B.

XXX

Richard Haven to Barclay Vaughan

My dear B.,—I must tell you about three men I met yesterday, one at a club, one in the street, and one in a train. All are between forty and fifty; in fact, contemporaries of my own. All are fairly well-to-do, or were before the War started. To-day no one knows what he is worth. And to-morrow——?

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The first was Donaldson. I forget whether you have met him: a tall man with a grey moustache, who went golf-mad after his wife died. He lives near Aylesbury. He was walking along Cockspur Street when I met him, or, to be more exact, when he met me. He was in that dangerous mood when a man says, "Which way are you going? I have nothing much to do; I'll go along with you."

I said I was going to the Albany.

"You're just the man I wanted to see," he said. "I want your advice. The fact is, the War is gettin' on my nerves, and I really think I ought to be doin' somethin'. Somethin' real, I mean. I am too old to fight; even if I could scrape through with a lie about my age. What do you say? Couldn't you suggest some organisin' I could do? I hate to praise myself, but I am certain that if there's one thing I can do, it's to organise. Look at the things I have done in that way. Look at our Golf Club. Works like a clock. Look at my billiard-room lamps; my own idea, and every one notices them. Ever since I was at school I have been an organiser. I ran all the various societies there. Now don't you

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think there ought to be a vacancy for me in one of the departments?"

I said I had an idea that they now prefer trained men; amateurs can be a nuisance.

"I know that," he said. "But mine's a different case. There's always room at the top and for a real organiser—a born administrator. Now do promise to think of something for me. And let me know."

I promised; it's the easiest thing to do. But I haven't the faintest belief in the man's ability. Besides, he's lazy.

Saunders came up to me in the club.

"Lunching alone?" he asked.

I had to admit it.

"You don't mind if I join you?" he added.

I couldn't tell the truth; so down he sat.

"I wanted to see you," he said. "You know several Government people, I know. Well, I have been talking it over with my missis, and we are sure that with my gift of organisation there must be some post I could fill just now, to help old England. I'd fight if I could, but I'm too old. But my brain's in perfect order and there's noth-

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ing I can't do with underlings. I've proved it again and again. You should see how I keep my gardeners hopping about; and, although I say it as shouldn't, my clerks adore me. Now surely there's some vacancy for me somewhere. Not this week and not next, because we've got people till then; but after that. Can't you think of anything? Do what you can for me, won't you?"

I said I would; knowing I could do nothing.

But why on earth am I supposed to be able to help everybody?

The third was Arthur Dodson, who married that fat Shelley girl and took Parker's old house. Dodson caught sight of me on the Underground a second too soon. A second later and my *Westminster* would have covered my face.

"Ah, that's right," he said. "I was hoping I should find you. I've got something very important to tell you."

I laid aside the paper and prepared for the worst.

"It's like this," he said. "All my friends tell me I've got very unusual abilities as an organiser,

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and upon my soul I believe they're right, though it may sound like swanking to say so. My head's all pigeon-holes, you know; all watertight compartments. I can keep things clear and distinct. And I never forget a face. That's what they said of King Edward—one of his great secrets of success. And it's true of me too. Well, up to the present I've done nothing for the country in its time of stress. When I say nothing, I don't exactly mean that. A *façon de parler*, don't you know? But nothing very practical. I've written a cheque or two, of course, and housed some Belgians, poor devils! But I've done nothing with myself; I haven't put my own peculiar talent into it. But now I feel that the time's come; and with this organising gift of mine, of which my friends speak so highly, I think I ought really to be of great service to those in power. Can't you suggest anything for a born organiser to do? I don't mind whether it's at Downing Street, or Pall Mall, or where it is. In fact, I don't mind if it's in France so long as expenses are paid. I think it's only right to ask for them, don't you? A labourer and his hire, don't you

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know? And what costs nothing is too often worth nothing, eh? But it must be sound organising work—armaments, stirring up the country, registering the slackers, I don't mind what. You'll try to think of something?"

I undertook to do so.

And now I know that whenever I see anybody I am acquainted with approaching me I shall at once say to him, long before he can speak, "You want me to help you to a post as organiser of some kind in connexion with the War, don't you? Because organising has always been your long suit. Munitions or something; it matters little so long as your organising genius (and genius is not too strong a word) can have play."

But it has had an effect on me. I shall never refer to my own organising ability any more, as I rather fear I may have done.—Yours, R. H.

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XXXI

Violet Lastways to Mrs. Haven

Dear Granny,—Toby ran up to town for the day yesterday and called on us. He is now quite natural in his uniform and has got all the stiffness out of his cap, so that it looks a hundred years old. All his nuttiness has gone. You remember how his hair used to be swept right back from his forehead with lovely comb marks in it. Well, now it is cut short and he has an absurd little moustache coming—a kind of toothbrush thing which, if it were only black, would be like Charlie Chaplin's.

Poor John has been bothering mother to let him say he is old enough to enlist. It's rather ripping of him, but mother won't hear of it. Of course she is right, but I know I should feel just as John does. He is awfully keen, and has a map and little flags, and we send him *Land and Water* every week. I am going to a London hospital as a help next Monday, and after a while I move on

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to France. It's lucky I had attended all those First Aid classes.—Your loving VI.

XXXII

Richard Haven to Toby Starr

My dear Toby,—I hope you have good quarters and that they won't send you out before you are really ready. When you go, remember (in the trenches) to keep your head down and your heart up—so far as you can. To an old bachelor like me there is something not too satisfactory in the thought that we should, for our protection, resort to our youngest; but England has been too much jumped by events to get the anomaly put right. Some day, perhaps? Yet what is the use of laws in warfare? No one will ever respect them. The Hague at this moment, to the inward eye, is more a ruin than Pompeii.

I am sending you a pocket flask. May it not only help you against chills but stop the bullets of the Hun!—Always your affectionate uncle,

Richard Haven

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XXXIII

Richard Haven to Lady Starr

Dear Helen,—You would not have thought that there was any one, save perhaps the Kaiser, who could have been made happier by the destruction of Louvain; but there is. My clerk. Not that he is cruel or bloodthirsty. Far from it. But his good star chances to have lured him to Belgium for his last holiday, and he spent three days in Louvain with his camera. The harvest is now his to the ultimate grain. He is never to be seen without his album of photographs. He has shown it to me; he takes it out to lunch; he hands it to callers with a few well-chosen remarks; and he is the shining light of his suburb. He has never been a hero before, and it is doing him no harm. But I suspect that he will overdo it. Indeed there must be all over England informative individuals who, "by a strange coincidence," spent their last holidays in Belgium, to whom their friends are beginning to give the cold shoulder.

I wrote to Toby yesterday and sent him a

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pocket-flask. That he comes through safely is my constant hope; not only for his sake and yours, but mine (for I am greatly attached to him) and England's. She will badly need every clean young man when sanity revisits this unhappy earth.—Yours ever, R.

P.S.—Here is an epigram for the moment:

> Meeting a publicist, I bade him say
> What is one's highest duty this grim day.
> "One's highest duty," he replied, "is this:
> To tell to others what their duty is."

XXXIV

George Wiston to Richard Haven

Dear Richard,—I don't wish to depress you, in your fool's paradise, but it seems to be an only too well established fact that there are traitors in the Cabinet. I hesitate to give names, but at least three men are suspected, with reason, of being in German pay. It is awful to think of what the power of money can be. You may ask why

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they are not exposed, removed, and punished—and the extreme penalty would be too merciful—but that argues ignorance of all the wheels within wheels that govern political life. And so the ghastly business goes on and England is sacrificed.

I have written a letter on this subject signed "A Patriot," which you will probably find in to-morrow's papers. I sent it to all, but some, of course, are venal too. The canker is very deep.

Being a little run down I am motoring to Wales for a few days; but it is a sad heart that I shall take with me.—Yours cordially,

GEORGE WISTON

XXXV

LADY STARR TO HER SISTER, MRS. LASTWAYS

DEAREST JOAN,—I cannot help feeling how fortunate you are in having a son who is well under age. It is awful to have both one's men in this grisly business. Vincent, of course, being chiefly engaged in organisation, is not exposed to much danger, although one never knows what an

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aeroplane bomb will do; but Toby is certain to get to the front, I fear. I say fear, and I mean it, but also I should be disappointed if he did not get there. I want him to do something fine, and I dread the anxiety too! But everything is a mixture. However, until the time comes I shall keep as cheerful as I can, for that is clearly the first job for us women.

Here we are knitting-mad, and at the rate at which we turn out socks you would think that every British Tommy was a centipede.

That is our work; our pastime is to discuss refugees. Where once we used to meet to play Bridge we now meet to compare Belgians. We call them mine or ours and set them off against those of our friends, claiming either that they are better or worse, with equal pride. No, not equal pride, for what one wishes is to have the worst. This is the sort of thing that we say to each other: "I must tell you what that little terror, Jamais Delavie, did yesterday. She went into Jack's dressing-room, took his diamond pin from the cushion there, and wrote: 'A bas Guillaume!' and worse things—dreadful things, only

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mercifully in French—on every window. She is only a child, of course, and the sentiment was perfect: but we shall have to have new glass." And then the others counter with something like this: "Yes, dear, aren't they wonderful? There's my old Madame La Sale—well, we simply can't get her out of the bathroom. What she does there, no one can guess; but she has complete possession of it every day for two or three hours. And that it's not for the ordinary purpose of a bathroom we are only too conscious."

The funniest case in our district, which is full of them, is Monsieur Punaise the artist. Lots of them are artists, you know. Indeed, one wonders sometimes if the Belgians did not subsist by buying each other's drawings. Monsieur Punaise is quartered on Lady Trenchard, who not only is the head and front of teetotalism hereabouts and has consented to the importation of claret from the grocer only because Monsieur is a foreigner and therefore does not matter so much, all foreigners being sinners, but is also the soul of moral rectitude and ecclesiasticism. And Monsieur

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Punaise's only means of livelihood is to make comic hand-painted post cards.

Now you know what a comic post card is on the Continent—all high spirits, nudity, and curves—and poor Lady Trenchard is in despair to have her spotless sanctuary turned into a factory for such things. But such is her sense of duty over the war and her feeling with regard to the poor Belgians, that she utters no protest. It's all very comic, but it's really rather splendid too, for I'm sure the poor old thing is really outraged and has to make a much bigger fight to keep amiable than any one would suspect.

I believe that Monsieur Punaise is to be exchanged for a penniless but devout Comtesse from the neighbourhood of Malines very shortly. The only trouble then will be that a Papist atmosphere will endanger the purity of the home. If ever the Comtesse is ill—and one thinks of Comtesses as either very naughty or very fragile, and this one of course isn't naughty—it will mean a visit from a priest. And just think of Lady Trenchard, who is a Vice-President of more than one Protestant League, with a priest under her

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roof! Again I say it is splendid, and it shows what is being done against the grain for the war.—
Yours ever, HELEN

XXXVI

MRS. HAVEN TO VIOLET LASTWAYS

MY DEAR VIOLET,—I am greatly interested in all you say about Toby, but one thing in your letter puzzles us. Who is Charlie Chaplin? I have heard of most of your friends, I believe, but I can't remember a Mr. Chaplin. Please tell me.

Poor John, I sympathise with him. It is extraordinary to me, that, since war is upon us, any one should not want to fight for England against these terrible Germans, especially now that we know what cruelties and injustice they can be guilty of in a conquered country. But such conduct is all so strange to me. Your grandfather and I had such a happy time in Dresden many years ago. We met a number of very nice people. I remember a Dr. Pfeiffer and his

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wife who were most kind, although they had an odd way of cutting up their food. And now to think of the wicked things that Germans can do! It is all most bewildering.

In our village, I regret to say, there is no feeling about it. I asked the young man who brings the milk if he were not going to enlist, and he replied that he had never been much of a one to fight. But the Belgians! I said. Wasn't that dreadful? Ought we not to crush such a foe as Germany? He replied that that was what our army and navy were for, and he didn't see there was any call for more soldiers.

I am glad you are preparing to be a nurse. That is what I should like to do if I were young and active. All I can do now is to knit and subscribe a little to the charities.

What are we to do about poor Kaiser? It is bad enough for him to be a dachshund, for the boys throw stones at him and he has not been out for a walk for weeks; but there is no doubt that we shall have to change his name. It is very hard for a dog who has answered to one name for years and years to have to begin another. Anne

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has had the clever idea that if we call him Hi, Sir! it will be so near the old name in sound that he won't know the difference. Poor dog, I hope he won't. We are going to try it, anyway, although it is ridiculous to call a dog Sir; but, of course, we can't put anything so foolish on his collar. I am sure the poor darling knows that something is wrong.—Your affectionate GRANNY

XXXVII

VIOLET LASTWAYS TO MRS. HAVEN

DEAREST AND MOST IGNORANT OF GRANDMOTHERS,—How your letter has made me laugh! Charlie Chaplin is not a friend of mine; he is the great funny man on the cinema films. It just shows how far away you live, you poor benighted thing! Charlie Chaplin is said to make thousands and thousands of pounds by his flat feet and grotesque walk. I know that he always makes me scream. When next you come to London you will see cardboard figures of him outside Picture Palaces.

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I told Uncle Richard about your milkman. He said he was not the first to belong to the Blue Water School.—Your loving VI.

XXXVIII

Miss Portia Grey to Box 27

Dear Lonely Sub.,—It would be delightful if I could bring a little unloneliness into your life by writing to you; but I find it very difficult to know how to begin. Indeed I have been trying for a fortnight. It is so long indeed that perhaps you are not lonely any more. I expect there were plenty of answers to your advertisement without mine.

The best thing, I am sure, is to tell you about myself, and then if you like the sound of me perhaps you will tell me about yourself. I may say that you are the first Lonely Sub. I have written to, although I have wanted to before, but could not get enough courage. But I am sure you are really in need of letters, and also are nice, because you say you would be grateful. I don't want you

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to be grateful to me, but so few people ever are grateful for anything.

I am eighteen and have just left school. It was a very jolly school, near Datchet, and I shall miss it. I don't quite know yet what I am going to do, but father wants me to do something and so do I. He has an idea I might make a good gardener, and he wants me to be outdoors. I had thought about being a doctor, because then one does more for other people; but he wants me to be near him (you see, my mother is dead and there are only us two), and there is an excellent place close to us where lady-gardeners are taught —we live at Ashford—and he needs me to live near him, or otherwise I should of course have become a Red Cross nurse or something useful long ago.

I wonder if you agree with me that one's father is more important to be cared for even than wounded soldiers? I have great arguments about it with my friends, and nearly all say that nothing matters now but soldiers, and that everything should be done for them; but I think it would be very unfair to leave father just when I am ready

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to be his companion at last. I should like to know what you yourself, as a soldier, think. Please be honest about it. As you don't know me, you can so easily be, and then we should begin right.

But I have written enough for a first letter.—Yours truly, PORTIA GREY

XXXIX

RICHARD HAVEN TO LADY STARR

MY DEAR HELEN,—You remember the clergyman you met here one night? Mr. Lavington. Well, to every one's surprise and the admiration of a few, he has enlisted. Not as a chaplain in a dog collar under his khaki, and a Picture Palace cane, as I have seen them now and then in the streets, but as a soldier. He has a lieutenancy and goes into camp at once. But what odd creatures these parsons can be! He came himself to tell me, and I congratulated him on having severed his connexion with professional religion.

"But I haven't," he said.

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"Surely," I replied, "you can't contemplate resuming your clerical duties after the war?"

"Of course," he said.

This is the type of mind that paralyses my own.

"Then," I said at last, "you are still a believer in the gospel of Christ?"

"Most emphatically," he said, with those large blue eyes dilating.

"All I can say," I replied at last, "is that I envy you. I wish I could have things both ways like that. Did not Christ preach and profess peace to all men? Don't you repeat to your congregation again and again the text about the other cheek? And bid them forgive their enemies? And tell them to pray for them that despitefully use them? Either it all means something or it does not. Either you believe in it or you do not. If you believe in it, you cease to be as complete a Christian as we look to our clergy to be, and you certainly have no right to bear arms for the purpose of destroying your fellowmen."

Mind, if Lavington were resigning Orders for ever I should not have said a word of this to him.

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It was his intention of resuming sheep's clothing after this bloody vulpine interlude that amazed me.

Then he began. He had thought it all out. This was a righteous war; the Allies stand for light against darkness. (Never before would he have discerned light among the free-thinking French, but let that pass.) We must approach Christ's dicta with great care. Some were meant to be taken literally no doubt; others were not. Did I hold, for example, that one should pluck out an offending eye? Certainly not. That was figurative, symbolic, and no doubt the remark about the other cheek also was. And so on.

Well, I could only shake hands with him and wish him good luck, and again fall to wondering why it is that so often a nicer form of conscience seems to go with secularism than with orthodoxy. But is it any marvel that abroad the English have got a name for casuistry?

I spent part of a wakeful night in composing a copy of verses for Lavington, and for those other professional religionists, far below him in public duty, who not only keep in the running now by

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their lenient attitude to fighting, but, looking cunningly ahead, realise that they must pave the way for their credit in peace too. But I did not send them. Lavington I do not want to hurt; and the others know too well how to disregard criticism.

Instead, it amused me to present Lavington with a revolver. I asked him if he would permit me to do so, and he said yes quite simply.

Here are the verses, for your own reading:

Christ did not wish that men might be like Him—
  That is an error springing who knows where?
Christ's purpose was that, in the distance dim,
  A grand ideal planet-like might flare:
Subject for praise, or theme on which to preach,
But never meant to come within our reach.

The very essence of ideals is
  That they should hover ever overhead.
To be translated to realities
  Immediately kills them. They are dead;
And what so hapless, sad, and tempest-tossed
As human beings with ideals lost?

Christ was *au fond* (to those that read aright)
  A warrior who thirsted for the fray,
Provided that, of course, the call to fight
  Was eminently righteous (as to-day).

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Not literally should His words be taken,
But over them the salt-box must be shaken.

The "other cheek"! 'Neath policy so quaint
What empire could endure a moment's space?
For Galilean or sequestered saint,
Possible, yes—but not our Island Race.
Times change, and compromise is ever rife,
And modern life is—well, is modern life.

The nearest we can get to what He willed—
Compatible with reason—that should be
Our aim by day and night until fulfilled,
Pursued with unremitting industry.
The Master (as we read Him) would not ask
His children to perform a sterner task.

So then upon the future let us strive
To fix our thoughts, nor on the present dwell.
A day will dawn (for those still left alive)
When peace will come and all once more be well,
And Christianity (less suspect then)
Again dispense its precious balm to men.

Three or four men to whom I have shown these verses have complimented me on the effort which they make to get at the truth. But none of these men would sign a document calling for a close time for the creeds until the war is over, or sug-

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gesting that our Archbishops were not at the moment earning their not inconsiderable salaries. That is one of the odd things about England—that private conscience and the public conscience are so different. In France a typical private individual's view of things is, when multiplied indefinitely, also the view of the State. Not so here, where as individuals we practise or subscribe to many liberties which would "not be good for the general public."

Oh well, of course it doesn't matter. Nothing matters now, but getting this war won and over. But how I should like to see a close time for all creeds, and self-reliance set in their place. How I should like to see all intellects now busied about the next world forced to concentrate on the betterment of this!

This, however, will not happen in my time; or in Toby's; or in Toby's great-great-great-grandson's. The professional religionists will be too strong for us. None the less I give them warning. Some lean years are coming!—Yours,

R.

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XL

Toby Starr to Portia Grey

Dear Miss Grey,—Before I answer your very kind and very interesting letter, which I may say I want to answer very much, I must tell you something rather horrid. Especially as you tell me to be honest, although you don't mean it quite in this way. The fact is, that advertisement of mine was not genuine. Two of us put it in the *Times*, one each, as a joke, and (I may as well tell you everything) there was a beastly bet on it as to which of us got most replies.

I should prefer not to tell you all this, but I feel I must.

Well, almost the first letter I got was from an old lady whose son had been killed, and who sent me her last unfinished letter which she had been writing when the news came—instead of to him, do you see?—and that just did for me, and I stopped the whole business. But you seem to have missed my second advertisement, and I am glad you did because I like your letter so much.

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Please tell me if I may write again now that you know all.—Yours truly,

TOBY STARR (2nd Lieut.)

Care of Mrs. Wickenden, Ivy Cottage, Amesbury.

XLI

PORTIA GREY TO TOBY STARR

DEAR MR. STARR,—Thank you for your frank letter. Please answer mine.—Yours truly,

PORTIA GREY

XLII

RICHARD HAVEN TO LADY STARR

MY DEAR HELEN,—It seems that the Thirty-nine Articles take full cognisance of war and that the clergy are thereby authorised to fight in a just cause. No. 37 not only exonerates them but makes it necessary if they are called for. So

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their lordships, the Bishops—our modern Galileans—sitting for the illustrated papers in full khaki uniform, are not such deplorable anomalies as I have been thinking them, and Lavington's case is to some extent altered—or would be, if he had pleaded such sanction; which he did not. In fact, I don't think he had realised it. But it does not eliminate the element of irony.

My feeling now is, since the *volte face* is so lawful, that all parsons of military age should at once join up and fight, and so become indeed the "black dragoons" that John Sterling called them. If one here and there, why not all? I feel sure we shall want every one in time, for I believe in Kitchener and his three years. In Germany there is already public talk of a new Christianity which shall walk openly side by side with martial aggrandisement—as it does now, and not in Germany alone. The readjustment of our Church's position may not be the least of the Kaiser's unintentional benefits to mankind.

Moreover, if all the parsons of military age went off it would rid myriad country livings of idle, vigorous young men with almost nothing to

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do. Such sinecures should be kept as rewards for older and real workers in cities, anyway.

I heard this morning of the death at the front of two of my oldest friends—Jack Cazalet, who was at school with me, and Sandford Thrale, whom I knew at Oxford. Both went straight into the army, but we had kept up. Thrale leaves a widow and practically nothing for her to live on, for he has had nothing but his army pay all his life. Cazalet was just engaged to a very nice woman. All the best men are being killed. The horrible thought is that the new England is to be populated by a cautious middling-class lot. It will always be a splendid thought that the aristocrats, who are supposed to be keenest on the good things of life, never hesitated for a moment.—Yours, R. H.

XLIII

Dick Bernal to His Cousin and Fiancée, Olive Wiston

My Darlingest,—I have had a most brilliant idea which came to me this morning while I was

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shaving. Why shouldn't we be married at once? I am sure I should fight much better if I was fighting for a wife than merely for my country. I have got to fight for my country whatever happens, because that's my business; but to fight for you as well would make such a difference! My sword would be twice as sharp then and my aim twice as good. I only wish officers were allowed bayonets, because that is when fighting for any one must really tell—jabbing is so much more satisfactory than slashing or pulling a trigger.

I'm sure my people would like me to be married quickly, and Aunt Kate too; but I am a little doubtful about Uncle George. Tell me what you think, my sweetest. DICK

XLIV

TOBY STARR TO PORTIA GREY

DEAR MISS GREY,—What a brick you are!

I absolutely agree with you about staying with your father. There are such lots of things to be

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done for soldiers too, at home, without becoming a nurse, and I expect you are doing some of them.

I am a year older than you. I was at Winchester, and have been at Oxford for a year, but left it to join the army. My father is a staff officer in France, but he did not much want me to be a soldier. All the same he is now glad that I am. So is my mother, although I am her only child.

Our home is near Newbury. My mother is all alone there, but as she practically runs the village she is all right. Please don't think because of my last letter that I am in no need of correspondence. I am. Life is fairly dull here, but, thank Heaven, one gets fearfully tired, or I don't know how the evenings would be got through.

I think Portia is a ripping name.—Yours truly,

TOBY STARR

P.S.—A cousin of mine was at a girls' school near Datchet. Her name is Violet Lastways. I wonder whether it's the same place.

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XLV

Toby Starr to Violet Lastways

Dear Vi,—I wish you would tell me whether there was a girl at your school named Portia Grey, and if so, what she was like.—Yours, Toby

XLVI

George Wiston to Digby Bernal

Dear Digby,—From what I hear from men of high standing and inner knowledge we shall never win this war unless the authorities have the courage to scrap three generals in every four. But we have always been criminally tolerant and good-natured and have fostered the practice of protecting the inept, and now the chickens come home to roost. I heard a story, which I have every reason to believe is true, illustrating this, only yesterday. A German sniper who was taken prisoner was asked if they had any reward for good shots, and he replied that they had, and then

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gave the scale. Ten marks if you killed an English private; twenty for a sergeant; thirty for a lieutenant; and forty for a captain. But if you killed a commanding officer you were punished, he said, because they are so useful to the Germans! So there you are.

If only we had a firm and capable man at the head of affairs instead of all these invertebrates, or scheming lawyers, we should never have been in this mess. Some one like Dizzy. But those great days are past.

I am sending a letter to this effect to all the more open-minded and critical papers for to-morrow's issue. I have entitled it, "Remember Byng," and it is signed "Dracon." Please look out for it.—Yours cordially,

GEORGE WISTON

XLVII

RICHARD HAVEN TO SIR VINCENT STARR

DEAR VINCENT,—These are bad times for vigorous men over military age. I never pretended

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to be much of an athlete; but even I feel as if I could do more than the War Office believes. Still I am old enough also to trust the authorities.

To-day I met your friend Stirling Mowatt and found him horribly hipped. This is more or less what happened.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Well," he said, "I'm done for, useless. I'm forty-six, and that's the devil just now. I'm as fit as I ever was in my life, but the War Office won't look at me. Forty-six is impossible! 'But I can walk thirty miles a day,' I tell them. 'Not with all the accoutrements,' they say. 'I'm a member of the Alpine Club,' I tell them. 'You're over age,' they say. 'I'm stronger than any of your twenty-year-old recruits,' I tell them. 'You're forty-six,' they say. And it's true!"

"Then the new regiment of Sportsmen came along," he continued, "and I tried them. No good. Forty-five is their maximum. So there it is! I'm done—useless. No one wanted to help more than I did, and I can do absolutely nothing."

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"I'll bet you've done a lot," I said, "if you would only confess."

"I tell you I've done absolutely nothing," he repeated testily. "I'm no use."

"But surely you're on a dozen committees?" I said.

"No," he said, "not one."

"Then you have started a Fund? Some minor fund guaranteed not to divert any money from the big ones?"

"No."

"But of course you've written to the papers?" I went on.

"No."

"Not about anything? Not to make the Government buck up about blankets, or squashing German lies, or allowing correspondents at the front, or anything like that?"

"No."

"But surely you have views as to the better management of things? The Press Bureau, for instance. Haven't you pitched into that?"

"No."

"Not even clamoured for all Germans in this

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country, even the naturalised ones, to be shot? Surely you've harried the Home Office a bit?"

"No."

"Well, you must at least have published a scheme for the partition of Europe after the war?"

"No; I never wrote to the papers in my life."

I shook his hand.

"Good heavens!" I said, "and this is the man who grumbles because he has done nothing for his country."

I wish old George would follow his example.

I saw Toby when he was in town on a flying visit to have his hair cut last week—or that is what I accused him of. He and his mother allowed me to give them lunch. He looks in splendid form.

I suppose, being a Red Tab, you are by now inured to sarcasm. George says that there is not a man on the Staff who knows his job!

The Charity appeal business is being a little overdone; but that of course is English. We always overdo everything. The results, however, show what a lot of money there is in the country

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and how much generosity. I am a little doubtful as to the cigarettes, for when I was younger and went into training for anything, smoking was the first thing that was knocked off. A stranger would almost think that this war was being run in the interests of the tobacco trade. Do you all really smoke all day?—Yours, R. H.

XLVIII

Olive Wiston to Dick Bernal

My darling Dick,—Father won't hear of it. I needn't go into all his objections, but he is firm as a rock, and though I don't agree, and mother doesn't agree, still I am his daughter and feel that whether he knows best or not he has the right to dictate. We must wait till the war is over, he says; which means, if his view of the war is a true one, for you know how gloomy he is, we shall be drawn to the altar in bath-chairs. O my dear, I am so sorry, but we must be brave about it. I saw poor Ruth yesterday. Terence's regiment is in action and she is in a terrible state of

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nerves; but she does her best to keep up. The only hopeful news I can give is that mother is going to do what she can in our interest with Uncle Richard.—Your adoring OLIVE

XLIX

RICHARD HAVEN TO LADY STARR

DEAR HELEN,—I think I got in a good thrust last night. Among the people staying here is a knut. He must be almost the last of the tribe; but here he is, just as knutty as though the Algies and Berties were still ruling the roast, and not Mars at all. Why he has not volunteered no one seems to know, and it is hardly a question that I, with my fantastic respect for other people's right to do as they like, should ask him. None the less, on discovering that he is perfectly sound in mind and limb, I permitted myself a sidelong remark or two on the subject of youth, vigour, and armaments, and was so successful that he fitted the cap on himself and suddenly turned to me, red with anger, asking if I meant to insult

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him. Then came one of those inspirations which are rarer than angels' visits: I mean rarer at the exact moment when one wants them, for I get them often enough on the escalier. "I wish I could," I said, "but it evidently needs a greater power than I, since the Germans haven't succeeded."

I am always on the look out for war anecdotes for you; but very few are really good, and those quickly become too familiar. Meanwhile I spare you the absolutely true story of the governess who was a spy (which succeeded the mythical Russians), because as it has happened to a personal friend of every one you must have heard it.

I used very much to resent Kipling's line in which he calls soldiering "the lordliest life on earth," but I am beginning to feel that (as usual) here too he knows more than I do, for there is not one of all the young men and older men that I know who have joined the army or returned to it who is not already twice the fellow he was. I was enormously struck by Toby's maturity and fitness the other day. Bless him!—Yours ever,

R.

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P.S.—I left this letter behind me this morning and am not sorry, for it enables me to add to it.

As to my score off that young knut, I have quite ceased to be proud of it. Thinking on the matter during the day, it seems to me that old people like myself ought to be very sure of ourselves before we taunt the young with backwardness. To begin with, it cannot seem to them to be so natural a thought, as it is to us, that the young and inexperienced are the bulwark of the country in times of danger. We take it for granted; but why should they? And there is something really offensive in the safe forties and fifties pushing the twenties towards the firing line—the ardent, thoughtless twenties, for whom, only yesterday, life was going to be such a lark! We have not perhaps thought enough of what these boys are giving up, most of them without a murmur. No, I have retired definitely from the recruiting business—at any rate with the lever of scorn to assist me.

All the same, that knut was rather a poisonous little beast.

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L

Anne Wiston to Richard Haven

Dear Uncle Richard,—Granny says won't you come and see her soon? She wants to talk about money and see what she can spare for the Prince of Wales' Fund and other things. Do come. I want to see you too and discuss another matter—Olive's marriage to Dick. As you perhaps know, Dick's regiment may have to go out very soon now and he wants to marry first. There are things to be said on both sides, of course.

Poor Granny cannot understand the war at all. She goes about wondering how the world can be so wicked, and why it is not all stopped. I asked her who was to stop it, but she could not say; but at the back of her mind is, of course, the thought that God ought to. It seems to me that more than ever will the simple have to find comfort, if they can, in the text about babes and sucklings.—Your loving niece, Anne

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LI

Violet Lastways to Toby Starr

Dear Toby,—Portia Grey was a darling. She is fairly tall, with very dark hair and very red lips. Her father, I believe, is an artist and rather an invalid too. She bowled horribly fast and won all our matches for us.—Yours, Vi.

LII

Richard Haven to Dr. Sutherland

Dear Sutherland,—You are missing a lot by being away from England now. You would be intensely interested in studying us, even if you were saddened too. We really are a very odd people. Under ordinary circumstances one is dimly conscious of it. Under war it is blazingly evident. Our tendency, which seems to be second nature, to belittle and depreciate our picked men—the men we ourselves have picked—is most striking and would be alarming if one was not

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certain that so much of it is only words, and that our best brains, the brains that lie deepest and serve as our ultimate court of appeal, are not momentarily in alliance with our tongues. When the war is over some of us ought to remember our attitude during its more critical periods with shame, but we shall not, because it's part of the British heritage to remember nothing: least of all our own shortcomings and the injuries done to us by our enemies. Our delight in forgiving is exceeded only by our facility in forgetting.

Countries can be too free—and especially does one feel this when one realises that there can never be any such thing as a free country. Had I been autocrat I should have stopped every newspaper instantly and issued the necessary news in a Government gazette, for that the press also can be too free we now know only too well. My experience of journalists is that, much as I like them, very few are to be trusted with liberty. One reason is that they so rarely have any real feelings or convictions. I have known many journalists, but hardly one who was not either a cynic or an axe-grinder, or both; and all, of course,

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are, by the nature of their calling, middlemen and busybodies.

These appalling casualty lists make one think, don't they? Here are men dying by thousands, all justifiably slaughtered, and no one to be called to order for the killing, but rather to receive decorations and glory. And then one remembers the hue and cry after Dr. Crippen a few months ago; two hemispheres in pursuit of one little myopic sensualist who had merely "done in" a superfluous wife!—Yours, R. H.

LIII

Richard Haven to Mrs. Haven

My dear Mother,—I will come down very shortly—next week for certain, probably on Thursday. Don't trouble your dear old head over the why and wherefore of the war. Only remember that this planet will be a slightly better place after it: because there's no doubt of that. Just at the moment it has gone mad.—Your loving R.

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LIV

Mrs. Wiston to Richard Haven

My dear Richard,—I want your advice. Olive, as you know, has been engaged to Dick since June, and now Dick's regiment is going to France. The question is, should they marry at once, as they want to, or wait till after the war? I wish I knew what to think. George is firm about postponement. As he says, very justly, if Dick is killed, Olive will be a widow, and probably will remain a widow for ever, for after the war there will be too few men. You know George's hard don't-dare-to-contradict-me style. He also says that since Dick will be away fighting, they may just as well wait, because they would see nothing of each other. He will not realise that both would be happier if they were married. As for the future, I feel, as I never felt before, that that must take care of itself.

Do tell me what your view is.

How fortunate you must think yourself to be a

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bachelor in these times! I know many parents who suffer agonies daily.—Your loving

KATE

LV

RICHARD HAVEN TO MRS. WISTON

MY DEAREST KATE,—My advice is all in favour of Dick and Olive marrying at once, as so many other soldiers are doing. Not only would they be happier, as you say, but, to put the matter bluntly, England is going to be in great need of children.

Not so much of your felicitations to me on being alone and childless! Marriage and children are not for all, but there are times when even the most resolute single beings can feel wistful and parental. The other day in a restaurant I watched a father and son together, and I have not forgotten it yet. The father was about fifty (or my age); the son, obviously a young officer, although in civilian clothes, about twenty-six. It was charming to see the solicitude with which the

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father pressed the son to eat, and the little furtive affectionate touches of his hand on the young man's arm and shoulder. They had half a grilled chicken, and it was the son who ate the wing and breast. Afterwards the waiter brought cigars in a number of boxes of different kinds, and the son took a small one. The father gave it back and insisted on a corona taking its place, but he himself smoked only a cigarette. It was all very pretty, and I think it needed the war to bring it out. Without the war there would have been as much pride and affection, may be, but the father would have been at once less conscious of it and more ashamed of it. The war emphasised it, made it all more articulate and much more poignant. Well, I hope that young fellow may come safely through, for both their sakes.

The odd thing is that this is the first time I have really wanted a son. But even with such pain and dread in his heart, I sat there and envied that father. Envied him not only his tremors, but his opportunity of giving a son to his

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flag. So you see that the war is making me a sentimentalist too!—Your affectionate brother,

RICHARD

LVI

RICHARD HAVEN TO LADY STARR

MY DEAR HELEN,—Of course you have heard the story of the soldier and the angels at Mons. If not, I will tell it to you; and if you have, I will (like our old friend Livesey, who cannot be deterred once he has wound himself up to be anecdotal) tell it you none the less. "Do I believe in the angels at Mons?", the soldier replied, "Of course I do. Why, I was so near them that I distinctly recognised my aunt."

One hears a great deal about the change in character which experiences at the front are to effect in our men. But I doubt if there will be much of it. Most men, I imagine, will bring back almost exactly what they took out; war will be only skin deep. That at any rate is true of most of those that I have met and talked with.

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But, of course, a young man wounded and invalided home after the first engagement might carry the traces longer. Custom would not have blunted things for him.

One effect of the war at home is to emphasise any natural tendency to satire or scorn that one may possess, don't you find? I expect you do, for you and I are very much alike. First there is the monstrous folly of the whole thing—the failure of mankind to get any wiser, the failure of Christianity to modify and control elemental cruelties and rapacities. And then there are the particular disenchantments—the muddle, the jealousies, the littlenesses. And England is peculiarly adapted for the exhibition, even exploitation, of these last, for we have an unbridled press into which any petty person may pour his grievances and censures. If one were oneself able to fight or be active in some large way, no doubt one would forget. Affairs would absorb one's mind. And to be that most deadly of all ages, forty-eight, and feel only thirty-five: that is an aggravation of the disease. No wonder that cynics multiply.—

Yours, R.

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P.S.—Here is a mite for your collection. A soldier's letter (official):

"DEAR MOTHER,—This comes hoping it finds you as it leaves me at present. I have a broken leg and a bullet in my left arm.—Your affect. son,

TOM SMITH"

LVII

LADY STARR TO RICHARD HAVEN

MY DEAR RICHARD,—I dare say you are right about our soldiers—even the New Army ones—not being much changed in character by the war; although, of course, many of them, I mean in particular the indoor types, will get a broadening that will make desk routine very irksome afterwards and perhaps will drive them back to the land or to the Colonies. But that, of course, is superficial: broadening rather than deepening.

But I am quite sure that changes are going on in our characters at home. I notice much more fatalism among the people here, and also more

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courage. For example, there is a great diminution of ailment talk. Even happy valetudinarians like Sir Rowland Oliver, who used to delight in new maladies, have given it up, feeling, I suppose, that with men dying in such numbers, and suffering such wounds and mutilations for their country, every day, it is indecent to mention little personal ailments. Not a bad thing. My cook under the same influence is now quite silent about her rheumatism. I mentioned to her that she seemed to have lost it; but that was an error of tact on my part. Oh no, she said, she hadn't lost it. Far from it. Far from it indeed. She was just the martyr she had always been. But she couldn't mention such a trifle when our brave lads were suffering in the trenches.—Your loving

HELEN

LVIII

TOBY STARR TO PORTIA GREY

DEAR MISS GREY,—There is one thing you don't tell me in your letter about yourself, and

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that is that you are fond of cricket. So am I. Indeed there was quite a chance, I was told, that I might have got my Blue next season, and now no one knows when there will be a next season. I'm so glad the cricketers knocked off so quickly. Very different from some of the other so-called sportsmen.

If there is ever county cricket again will you let me take you to Lord's? That would be something to look forward to.

I am very busy from early in the morning till dinner-time, and after dinner I ought to be busy too, reading tactics, but I am too dog-tired. I had no idea before that war was so fascinating. I had thought of it almost wholly as firing cannon and rifles and charging; but it's all so human too, like a magnificent glorified chess: full of problems and the necessity of thinking about what the other fellow may be thinking about. I am beginning to get a quite new notion of generals. And what a terrific swell Napoleon was! I can see that now.

It makes me wish so that we had had a military class at school and Oxford—strategy, you

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know, and all that sort of thing, with maps like Belloc's to make it plain—so that we could all be readier for it now. Perhaps in the future they will.

Please tell me what kind of things your father paints. I have asked one or two men here who reckon to be nuts on art if they know his work, but they seem only to know a man named Raphael Kirchner, who they all swear by. I don't know anything about art, but I know what I like. Some of the new men who call themselves Cubists and what not give me the stomachache. Pictures ought to be either beautiful or jolly, I think.

I hope you will find time to answer this.—Yours sincerely, TOBY STARR

P.S.—What kind of dogs have you got?

LIX

NANCY BERNAL TO LADY STARR

DEAR AUNT HELEN,—Mother is in the seventh heaven to-day, for she has at last got a promise

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from some one with a title, who has got a promise from some one still higher up, that the Queen will visit *our* hospital supply depôt and not the other. There has been tremendous competition, but mother's lot having won, the rival place will have to put up with a Princess.

Mother is wonderful there. You know how she hates any kind of needlework at home; but there she will sit, in a white head-dress like an abbess, making swabs and bandages and quilting pneumonia jackets by the hour. And often there's a Duchess on one side of her and an Honourable on the other. She has never had such luck before.

The excitement here is whether Dick, who may have to go to France any day, shall marry Olive before he goes, practically instantly, or wait. Dick is all for marrying right away; but the Wistons seem to be divided. I want him to marry at once too, because then he might be put on to some job of training recruits here on account of being married; but I know that this view is selfish.

I am now busy at a canteen at Charing Cross for part of every day; and I should really like it

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if it were not for the draughts. My latest theory is that all colds begin at railway stations.

The soldiers are so funny in their politeness. They would, I am sure, be much happier if we were real barmaids, and for their sakes I wish we were. They take such pains, some of them, to eat nicely, and they have such terrible difficulty in remembering where they are and leaving out adjectives. It's very hard on a man with a good story to tell, just as if he was in a bar, having all of a sudden to spoil it because of us. They're so grateful too, some of them; but that really hurts. Fancy being grateful for a cup of coffee and a bun when they've been risking their lives for us and England! In future it is ingratitude that I shan't mind—the War has taught me that.
—Your loving NANCY

LX

MRS. WISTON TO RICHARD HAVEN

DEAR RICHARD,—I wish I could get George to agree; but he has become very difficult since

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the war broke out, and takes no interest in anything but his country's deplorable plight, as he views it. I am sure he goes too much to the club, where there seems always to be some one who knows that the worst is in store for us.

I should like Olive and Dick to marry, for their happiness as well as the reason which you give—which makes it all so utilitarian and physiological. I am sure he would not be a worse soldier for knowing that he had a sweet young wife waiting for him at home.

I wonder if you would mind very much coming soon for the night and talking to George about it? He rarely sleeps in town now, but catches the 6.15.—Your loving KATE

LXI

RICHARD HAVEN TO GEORGE WISTON

DEAR GEORGE,—About these young people. Since you have given your consent to the marriage, why object to an immediate wedding? If Dick never comes back, there may still be an-

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other English citizen, and its parents will have been happy. If he does come back, all will be as it would have been. If you take my advice you will say yes and hurry the thing along, for every one's sake.—Yours, R. H.

LXII

George Wiston to Richard Haven

Dear Richard,—If you viewed the war as I do you would write differently. But you have not my opportunities for getting at the truth; I meet regularly a number of specially informed men. The odds against Dick's return to England are enormous, such is the terrible toll that will be exacted of our trifling force. We shall be used up in no time, if only as a shield for the French, for Joffre means to save every Frenchman he can. Naturally I do not view with any particular pleasure the idea of Olive as a widow permanently on my hands; for there won't be enough husbands to go round for the single girls, let alone widows, when (if ever) this war is over; and Digby is not

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in a position to do anything for his daughter-in-law. Surely you see my point of view.—Yours cordially, GEORGE WISTON

LXIII

PORTIA GREY TO TOBY STARR

DEAR MR. STARR,—Father is what is called an archæological painter. He would like to paint landscape, but not being equal to travelling about he has to do everything in the studio. I don't suppose you would care very much for his pictures, which are usually classical in subject and are absolutely exact in their details. I like the landscapes he used to do better, and so, I think, does he. It is very hard when artists who so love this beautiful world should be unable to see scenery; but he is always very brave about it, and says he saw too much when he was younger and stronger, and we have wonderful sunsets here.

Our dogs are spaniels—black cockers. I don't think I could live without them, and that is why I expect never to live in London, because, of

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course, it isn't fair to keep black cockers there. They are named "Ebony" and "Nox," which are both rather good words to call out.

Father has a Pekinese called "Trody," an abbreviation of "Trop de nez," which indicates what her fault is. I mean, of course, from the point of view of a judge at a Show. She has no faults really.—Yours sincerely,

PORTIA GREY

LXIV

NANCY BERNAL TO LADY STARR

DEAR AUNT HELEN,—Some of mother's co-helpers are too wonderful. There is one lady who arrives only to leave again. There is another who is showing her friends over the place almost all day long. There is another who is continually being wanted on the telephone, and sometimes sends messages like this: "Please" (this to the already overworked secretary's assistant) "it would be so very kind of you if you would answer it for me. Would you mind telling her?—it's

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my maid who is speaking; she is French, but if you speak very slowly, she can understand—or perhaps you can speak French? No? What a pity! You would so enjoy some of their books. So witty and so charming. But speaking very slowly will be all right. Would you be so very kind as to tell her to tell the chauffeur to be here at four sharp, and to tell the nurse that Miss Diana had better not go out to-day, as it's colder than I thought, but there is no harm in Master Vivian going out with the under-nurse so long as he doesn't sit down? And oh, will she tell cook that we shall be eight this evening, and not ten? That would be so sweet of you. I'd come myself, only I oughtn't to leave this work. Thanks so much."—Mother imitates her wonderfully.—
Your loving NANCY

LXV

MRS. CLAYTON-MILLS TO HER SISTER-IN-LAW, MRS. WISTON

MY DEAR JOAN,—Archibald, who has been very restless and unsettled for a long while and

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quite unable to sleep after seven in the morning, hurried to town yesterday to consult a doctor as to whether or not he was fit to enlist. He went in the highest of hopes and spirits, but returned in the lowest. The doctor found him quite unsuited, and has told him he must wear glasses, or his sight will steadily go.

The poor boy is very unhappy, but has promised to take a week at Brighton and rest. If you can think of anything to cheer him up, I wish you would let me know.—Your affectionate

MAUDE

LXVI

DR. SUTHERLAND TO RICHARD HAVEN

DEAR HAVEN,—As an instance of the far-reaching effect of the war, I am enclosing a letter from Hawaii giving an account of a very engaging zealot for humanity out there.

[*Enclosure*]

"A little dried-up old man of not above five feet in height, with a skin like parchment and a

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voice like a decrepit old melodeon, was once a clerk in a stationery store here. He was so crabbed and odd and disagreeable withal that the store let him go, and he has kept body and soul by clerking in a plantation store away in the country. Our one bond of sympathy is kept alive because he borrows books on socialism out of my library, and burns with such zeal when he returns them, dreaming of the time when the revolution shall come. . . . Two weeks ago he lost his position in the country store. Even that place could not stand for him. He came to my house on Sunday afternoon and said that he had read of what we were doing for the Belgians, and that now he is out of a position he intended to devote himself to relief work, and he wanted to lay his plan before me.

"It was this: In his youth he had learnt to 'speak pieces,' if you know what that means. So now he intended to go out to some of the Plantation headquarters in the country, borrow or rent a warehouse, and announce an evening's entertainment which would consist entirely of his recitations. When he assured me that he was a good

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elocutionist, I did not have the heart to refuse to give him an opportunity to try it on me. The piece was 'Curfew shall not ring to-night.' It was awful. But it was his offering to the cause and as such was not to be scorned. He then showed me a brown wrapping-paper on which he had written an announcement, stating the time and place of his entertainment and the cause to which the proceeds were to be given. I attempted to dissuade him, giving him a plausible reason why this was not the time, but he held to his purpose, and the next morning I saw him, a little old man of fifty, on a deplorable bicycle to which he had tied an umbrella, a change of clothing, and a few bananas for his lunch, starting for the lower end of the island.

"The following Sunday he returned cheerful as ever, and I hardly dared ask him to tell me of the failure which I knew was in store for him. He went at it his own way, however, and drawing a note-book from his pocket, showed me that the net result of his work for the suffering civilians of Europe was $266. On the following Monday he came to say good-bye with his same equipment,

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even to the bananas for lunch. By the mail of yesterday, he sends me a memorandum of a grand total of $500, which he has got pledged up to the present time. He will go round the island, and then will go to the island of Maui, and then probably to the islands in the north of the group. At every place he goes and gives an entertainment, he asks the people to name a treasurer, and to submit to him their donations. Each person designates the object to which his money shall go, and the funds come to me for final distribution. He does not touch one cent of money on his trip, and his small travelling expenses are paid out of his scanty stock of money saved from years of labour. I would not be surprised to find him turning in a grand total of $1000 for this island. When he set out I would have said that $20 would have been the outside figure."

—It's fine to see the confines of the earth coming in like this!

Here in New York the progress of affairs is being watched very vigilantly. The President very naturally does not want war. How could

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he? And war would be a very serious thing, there being so many Germans and German sympathisers scattered about the country. That would mean every kind of outrage and internal strife, I fear.

On the other hand, I believe Wilson to be a friend of right, and if he thought it was needful he would run these internal risks, as he is being urged to do, *coûte qui coûte*, and strike. But I pray the need will not arise.—Yours, T. S.

LXVII

Richard Haven to George Wiston

Dear George,—If you did not hear from me at once it is because the older I grow the more convinced I am that letters should not be answered till the day after. One merciful night should, whenever possible, intervene. That is to a large extent what nights are for.

You look too far ahead and expect too much that is bad. Now, I make a suggestion. Olive has always been a great favourite of mine, as you

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know. If Dick is killed or disabled, I will myself allow her £150 a year, on the condition that she is now allowed to marry instantly. Is it a bet? —Yours, R. H.

LXVIII

George Wiston to Richard Haven

Dear Richard,—I agree, on the further condition that you do not mention the terms to anyone.—Yours cordially, George Wiston

LXIX

Richard Haven to George Wiston

[*Telegram*]

Of course not. Haven

LXX

Mrs. Clayton-Mills to Mrs. Wiston

Dear Joan,—Just a line to say that Archibald writes me from Brighton that he is taking

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lessons in motor driving with the idea of assisting with the Red Cross in France. Isn't it fine of him?—Yours, M.

LXXI

Captain Derrick to His Wife

My Dearest,—We draw nearer to the real thing every day. Don't worry about me. I don't feel anxious, but naturally one must take precautions, and I have written to Haven to make everything all right, although I had of course gone into such matters before I left. English soldiers' wives are beginning to feel the strain of this calling for the first time for many years, and you for the first time of all.

If I am hit I don't want you to come over. Stick to the children, who have become the most important thing in the world and will be even more so. The next generation! It is terrible to see some of the fine young fellows out here who will now never have children of their own.

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Rightly, of course, old men should fight, and those who already are fathers.

There is something desperately fine about France. I don't want to live there—I wouldn't swap miles of it for an inch of England—but it's fine. The French are centuries behind the times in sanitation and all that kind of thing; they have dull drinks and no breakfast; they call bacon "lard," and when you get it it isn't bacon; their clothes are poor and their boots a disgrace; their billiard tables are ridiculous and their country houses impossible, without lawns or comfort or anything jolly like ours; they know nothing about so many things that we think necessary. But they're splendid and resolute, and one believes in them. It's partly, I think, because they believe in themselves; they're so much in earnest; they're not ashamed of their clothes or their gestures or their great stomachs. But even more, it's because one is so sorry for them in having this war thrust upon them. For the French, I am certain, want to invade no one. They want to be let alone to be happy, and they want no one to be unhappy.

There is a unity about them too. One can

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think of France as one cruelly injured resolute person, whereas one can never—at least I can't—think of England as a single figure. That is rather odd, isn't it? But the French are so much more *of* their country than we are.

Kiss the Prillils for me, my dear love.

TERENCE

LXXII

TOBY STARR TO PORTIA GREY

MY DEAR MISS GREY,—I believe I should like your father's pictures very much. I am quite keen on archæology, and last summer I rubbed heaps of brasses for a friend of ours. I also walk to Stonehenge quite often. It is not far from here and is a ripping place. One evening I counted twenty-three hares on the way there and back. Your father would make a fine picture of the Druids worshipping there. But I like other pictures too, and I always go to the Academy, at least once, with the mater, and then we go a buster and have lunch at the Ritz, close by, and

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to a matinee after. I wonder if your father sends his things to the Academy. I shall know what to look for if he does. The mater paints a bit herself, but only in water colours. Landscapes—really rather jolly.

It's awful being without a dog, but I can't have one here as my movements are too uncertain.

I am getting a great dab at throwing hand grenades. That's where cricket comes in.—Yours sincerely, TOBY STARR

LXXIII

RICHARD HAVEN TO BARCLAY VAUGHAN

DEAR B.,—Have the new Tuppenies reached Edinburgh, I wonder. I went into a bookshop yesterday and found a table covered with pamphlets at this modest figure, all proceeding from Oxford. What, you will ask, has Oxford—and more particularly the cloistered conversationalists of All Souls—to do with war? Well, I can tell you that Oxford has behaved nobly, and I spent a long and stimulating evening in appreciating

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that fact. If you want the clearest idea of the war from the ethical and historical points of view you must down with your Tuppences. Deny yourself a few baps (don't you call them?). But in particular get Walter Raleigh on *Might and Right*. This is the end of it:

"It would be vain for Germany to take the world; she could not keep it; nor, though she can make a vast of people miserable for a long time, could she ever hope to make all the inhabitants of the world miserable for all time. She has a giant's power, and does not think it infamous to use it like a giant. She can make a winter hideous, but she cannot prohibit the return of spring, or annul the cleansing power of water. Sanity is not only better than insanity; it is much stronger, and Might is Right.

"Meantime, it is a delight and a consolation to Englishmen that England is herself again. She has a cause that it is good to fight for, whether it succeed or fail. The hope that uplifts her is the hope of a better world, which our children shall

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see. She has wonderful friends. From what self-governing nations of the world can Germany hear such messages as came to England from the Dominions over sea? 'When England is at war, Canada is at war.' 'To the last man and the last shilling, Australia will support the cause of the Empire.' These are simple words and sufficient; having said them, Canada and Australia said no more. In the company of such friends, and for the creed that she holds, England might be proud to die; but surely her time is not yet."

—Having gone to the trouble of copying all that, I now enclose a copy of the pamphlet itself, so that you can have the whole fine argument.

Day after day I look in vain for the god who should already have emerged from the infernal machine—War. It is customary for national crises to produce national giants; but so far, in the biggest crisis of modern times, no one has appeared. In no single walk of life has the stress under which we are labouring evolved a big new man. Certain of our politicians may have im-

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proved their stock, but only slightly; many of them have merely revealed new depths of paltriness. Nor have the arts risen to the occasion. As for the journalists, the yapping ones, they make me sad indeed. At a time when all those in authority have needed trust and encouragement, they have been suspicious and hostile. It is an extraordinary phenomenon. Of all varieties of government that seem to me disastrous, I should put government by newspapers first, and that is what we are threatened with.

No doubt things will get better. We move slowly in England and are not ashamed to allow our processes of thought and the changings of our mind to be visible. And thank goodness the Press does not represent the country. The country is sound underneath, but it takes a long time to alter old habits of irresponsibility. We have been far too long prosperous and well protected, I suppose.—Yours, R. H.

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LXXIV

Mrs. Park-Stanmer to Lady Starr

O my Dear,—I must tell you about a poor boy here who has just been jilted—such a nice creature and so pathetic. What he would do without my sympathy I can't think. He's a cousin of Lord Bonchurch, and a second lieutenant in Horace's regiment. The girl and he were brought up together, and their marriage was an understood thing, but she has suddenly taken up with a boy in the Flying Corps, and poor Gerald (that's his name) is heartbroken. He showed me her letter —a most cold-blooded statement of fact. What there is in these aviators I have not yet gathered, but they leave the other men nowhere.

Gerald comes round to see me every afternoon, and I am gradually healing his poor sore feelings. He has given me a lovely gold cigarette-case as what he calls my fee for attendance. Isn't that charming of him? You should see the gratitude in his eyes when he looks at me. It is very de-

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lightful to realise that one has this power of help.—Your devoted AMABEL

LXXV

JOHN LASTWAYS TO MRS. LASTWAYS

DEAR MOTHER,—Excuse me opening the subject again, but I have found the enclosed paragraph in a paper. Please read it. It seems to me to spike your guns very thoroughly. Now please say that you withdraw your objections, which I and all my friends here think are, using the word in its best sense, footling. If this boy of sixteen can do things like that, surely you would be proud to see me doing the same. I quite see that you don't want to lose me, and that there ought to be a man at the head of a family, but there are occasions when country comes first. Be a Spartan!—Your loving son, JOHN

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[*Enclosure*]

"A Hero of Sixteen

"A young private of the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, who through his being only sixteen years of age was going to be sent back to England, has proved that bravery does not depend on birthdays. During a recent German attack he volunteered to carry a message when the wires had been broken, and succeeded in reaching the headquarters of the brigade. The artillery then saved the situation by their curtain of fire, and the infantry, who had been rapid-firing, were glad to hear their colonel say, 'They are beaten again.' The Brigadier complimented the young private on his pluck, and took his name."

LXXVI

Mrs. Lastways to John Lastways

My dear Boy,—Please do not re-open this question. So long as you are under military age

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and at school you must do as I and your schoolmasters tell you. I quite understand that you want to be a soldier and go to France, and I am proud of you for feeling like that, but we cannot do all that we want to in this world, and it would be very bad for us if we could. Also I want you to ask yourself if you are quite sure that it is wholly love of country that is making you so restless, and not the desire for change and excitement? Directly the holidays come we will talk about it; letters are not much good. —Your loving MOTHER

LXXVII

CAPTAIN DERRICK TO HIS WIFE

MY DEAREST,—We are now in the thick of it, and I have not had my clothes off till to-day for nearly a week. This is a very hot corner, and we take and lose and re-take trenches continually. So far I have had wonderful luck, and what began by being a taste of hell is now normal life. One learns very quickly to pick the dangerous

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sounds out of all the shattering turmoil and behave accordingly. But one makes no plans: the future ceases to exist. In ordinary life one never can hug the present quite sufficiently close, but here the present is all.

I have lost some of my finest men, and that is very distressing—men who would have done anything for me.

The difference between the French soldiers and ours is extraordinary. Our men can be sullen enough, but there are always some who are jolly in a mechanical kind of way—not perhaps really being funny, but repeating funny things they've heard Graves or Robey or Harry Tate say. Even under fire, even when the gas is seen coming along, they say these things or use phrases from the London streets, such as "Higher up, there!" like a 'bus conductor, or from football or cricket. A man just missed by a shell or bomb explosion says, "How's that, umpire?" for example: "Not out."

There's a kind of unwritten law that the men have got to be jocular about everything. But the French aren't like that at all. They are not

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funny, they are apathetic or sardonic. Perhaps it's the difference between conscription and an army so largely amateur and out for adventure. Perhaps it's the difference between being on your own invaded soil and visiting it on a great semi-sporting expedition.

Here is an example of what the Boches can do. Good warfare, no doubt, but fairly beastly too. I had to sit in a trench for a certain fixed time and then climb out and lead an attack on the nearest German trench, which meanwhile was being shelled over our heads. There I sat, staring at my wrist-watch, and waiting for the moment. "Makes you believe in God, doesn't it?" my sergeant said to me; but whether he was ironical or serious, I don't know. When the moment came I scraped together a kind of cheer, and we scrambled out and rushed across the open. Now and then one of my men was hit, and I remember thinking how like shot rabbits they were as they spun round. When we reached the trench it was of course empty. They nearly always are. Nothing in it but a few helmets. Now there is nothing our men value so much as

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helmets, as souvenirs, and there was a rush for these. It passed through my mind to warn them, but there was no time; and I had the pleasure of seeing them blown to pieces before my eyes—for in each helmet was a bomb, carefully placed there. That's Prussia!

Now for my first bath for what the men call "Donkey's ears," meaning years and years.

Kiss the littluns.—Your loving

TERENCE

LXXVIII

LADY STARR TO RICHARD HAVEN

DEAR RICHARD,—I have only good news from Toby, who is working very hard and—as his commanding officer tells me privately—is going to be a very good soldier. How serious he is you may gather from the fact that when I asked him what I could send him he said he wanted only histories of great campaigns.

Of the future I dare not think; but I hope that I shall bear bravely and decently whatever ill

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may come. The daily casualty lists are too distressing. Our poor vicar has just lost his only son—a nice boy of twenty, who looked to me, when I saw him just before he went out, as utterly doomed as any one can be. It is odd that one has this feeling sometimes.

The war widows in the village now number three. Not the least part of their grief (poor simple dears) comes from the circumstance that there can be no funeral. A funeral helps.

We never thought of two at any rate of these three husbands as models, or as greatly beloved by their wives, but now that they are no more the wives speak of them as though their lives had been all thoughtful devotion and self-sacrifice.

This posthumous pride is a very pretty human trait, even if it provokes a smile.

The war makes no changes in some people. I have a frivolous friend, Mrs. Park-Stanmer, the wife of an officer stationed at Sandwich, who writes me now and then. She is just the same self-centred flirt that she always was; except rather more so, for the war has multiplied opportunities. The kind of woman who, going to the

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National Gallery, would see only the reflection of herself in the glass of the pictures and prefer the darker ones in consequence.—Yours,

HELEN

LXXIX

JOHN LASTWAYS TO LADY STARR

DEAR AUNT HELEN,—Won't you use your influence with mother and get her to let me enlist? Toby is a soldier, and he is very little older than me and not so tall. Mother always thinks such a lot of what you say to her.—Your affectionate nephew, JOHN LASTWAYS

LXXX

RICHARD HAVEN TO LADY STARR

MY DEAR HELEN,—I keep on asking people for war stories for you. Here is the latest that I have come across—I mean latest worth sending: there are too many indifferent ones. Mrs. Car-

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stairs, who lives near us, asked a woman the other day if her husband was at the front yet. "Oh yes, and I hope he'll serve the Germans the same as he used to do me."

I should like to know more of what it feels like to be a naturalised Briton of German birth and education in England at this moment. To what extent are they against their old country or for ours? Can one wholly denationalise himself and be any real good? Such willingly expatriated Englishmen as I have met abroad have always seemed to have some lack, some blemish. It is not natural for a man to change countries. Letters in the papers from anglicised Germans expressing their disgust with Germany do not strike me as very admirable documents. Even while glad to have their support, one is a little ashamed of it—or of them (so complex are we!) for offering it. Perhaps the better way is to do as some of the richer ones do and head all the war subscriptions. All wise men insure, however great the premium.

Here is a little poem that was published just before the war broke out:

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The Mourner

I met the mother of my friend who died,
And kind and tender were the words she said;
But this was what her poor eyes could not hide:
What right have you to live and he be dead?

How often do I say that last line over to myself nowadays, when bereaved mothers are so often met! R.

LXXXI

From a Daily Paper

[Marriage]

Bernal—Wiston.—On the 3rd inst., at St. Peter's Church, Chislehurst, very quietly, by the Rev. Canon Fodder, M.A., Richard, only son of Digby Bernal and Mrs. Bernal of 73 Bedford Gardens, W., to Olive, second daughter of George Wiston and Mrs. Wiston of Chislehurst.

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LXXXII

Toby Starr to Portia Grey

My dear Miss Grey,—I thought about you an awful lot yesterday, for I went to the wedding of my cousins, Dick Bernal and Olive Wiston. He is in the regular army and goes to the front next week, and they were married in a great hurry in consequence.

After the wedding there was a great crush of people at the house, and do you know, I as near as a touch bolted and got into a train for Ashford—it's on the same line, you know—but somehow I funked it. Besides, I had the mater to look after.

Weddings are rum things, aren't they? I suppose it's women who like all the ceremony and new clothes. I wonder if you do. This was rather a miserable kind of wedding, because every one looked at poor old Dick as though he were certain to be killed, and really one got to think of it rather as an execution than a wedding.

They have gone to Brighton for just four days'

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honeymoon, and then Olive returns home again.

Not my idea of things at all.—Yours sincerely,

TOBY STARR

LXXXIII

NANCY BERNAL TO JERRY HARDING

MY DEAREST JERRY,—All the time the wedding was going on I was thinking how easily it might have been ours. I wonder if you did too.

Now that the ice is broken and father and mother are accustomed to weddings, don't you think we had better break the news and marry at once? Pretty nearly the same people will come, and as they've all got their clothes that would save expense, which we ought to do in war-time. That's one thing. Another thing is that, though you may not think it, I want to be Mrs. Jerry Harding!

A third thing is that I am not really wanted here at all, for mother is never in from morning to night, she has so many committees, etc.; and father is never in either, and when he is he does

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nothing but read war books or *Land and Water*. So I shan't be missed.

Then, if you were hurt, I should have the right to come out to you. But something tells me that you are not going to be hurt.

Dear Jerry, do agree to this.—Your true love,

NAN.

LXXXIV

MRS. BERNAL TO MRS. HAVEN

DEAREST MOTHER,—You did right not to come to the wedding, which was very fatiguing. Dick seems doubly lost to me; but Olive is a dear girl, although I could wish she was not a first cousin. Still, I don't intend to worry in advance. In these days there is nothing for one but activity and fatalism.

Fortunately I have certain interests in connexion with the war which keep me fairly busy. I am on five committees and have undertaken to get £500 for a new hospital within a month. Please send me something, and tell Mary I want

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something from her too. And would not the maids like to contribute a mite each? Every little helps, you know.

Fortunately we still have Nancy, who will not, I hope, become engaged for a long time yet. She shows no sign of it at present.—Your loving daughter, MARGARET

P.S.—We have got two Belgians coming.

LXXXV

LADY STARR TO JOHN LASTWAYS

MY DEAR JOHN,—I sympathise with your wish to enlist and think it is very sporting of you; but I am not going to say anything to your mother about it, because I feel that she knows best. And I've got a little plan which will help you towards being useful when the time does come. You know our Renault car? Well, there is no one to drive it, now that your uncle is in France and Toby is in camp and we have let Jarvis go. So what I suggest is, that, as every

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one ought to be able to run a car, I shall give you the money to be taught directly the holidays begin, and lend you the car to practise with. Do you agree? But of course you won't go on worrying your mother about enlisting?—Your affectionate AUNT HELEN

LXXXVI

JERRY HARDING TO NANCY BERNAL

DEAREST SWEETEST,—I have your wonderful letter and I don't know what to do. I want you so much, but I don't think it's fair to marry you like that. You see I might get killed directly after, or I might be frightfully knocked about and even blinded, and that wasn't a bit what you bargained for when you said Yes on that gorgeous evening on the river. Do agree with me that it is best to wait till after the war. Don't think it is because I don't love you that I write like this. It is because I love you so much.—Your devoted and worshipping J.

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LXXXVII

Mrs Haven to Her Sister in New Zealand, Mrs. Glazebrook

My dear Emmie,—Once again I take pen in hand to write my annual letter. Little did I think last year that I should write it thus, under such unhappy conditions, with Europe a great battle-field. But we cannot anticipate the future. Next year I may not be alive to write at all, or you to read; while even this letter may never reach you, but the ship that carries it be sunk by a torpedo. Such dreadful things happen now, all owing to the ambition of the Kaiser. What has come over Germany I can't think. The Germans that Henry and I used to know were so different. Rather stuffy, it is true, and bald and shortsighted, but not cruel and grasping, I am sure. And you remember our Fräulein, what a willing little thing she was. But now even the German governesses are spies, they say.

Most of our family are busy over the war.

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Indeed all England is, and I dare say New Zealand too.

Helen has her husband, Vincent, on the Staff in France, and her boy Toby, who is a fine young fellow, left Oxford to enlist, and is now training as an officer on Salisbury Plain and expecting to go out any day. Helen herself looks after her village, knits, and is generally very efficient, as she always was even as a small girl. You remember how she cooked that supper for us on the Sunday night that the cook was inebriated? and she only twelve at the time.

Joan's daughter Violet is rubbing up her French and doing probationer's work in order to be ready to take up a post at a hospital in Paris, where she has friends. Poor John, who is still at school and is only sixteen, is perpetually worrying his mother to let him enlist. He is big for his age and it seems that there have been a number of cases of boys joining the Army through pretending to be older than they are. But she remains firm.

Kate, I imagine, has her hands fairly full with George, for having now no business to occupy his

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mind he devotes himself to criticising every one in authority. He gets hold of all the rumours and spreads them and is confident that the Allies haven't a chance. He is at his club all day and returns in the evening to terrify the life out of poor Kate and his household. You know how fond some English people always are of running their own country down. Well, there are plenty of them about just now, and George is worse than any. The letters he sends to Anne, if they were true, would keep us in utter dejection day and night; but Anne very sensibly disregards them. "Poor father!" is all she says; "he would be miserable if there was nothing to find fault with."

Last week Anne went home for two or three days to help with Olive's wedding to Richard, Margaret's boy. I don't like cousins marrying, at any rate, first cousins, but we must hope for the best. Richard had to return to his soldiering after only a few days. How different from Henry's and my honeymoon, which lasted for six weeks! These hurried marriages are now very common in England and probably in France and

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Germany too. It is very hard on the brides to have to be so hustled and it probably means fewer presents too. Poor dears! Richard and Olive went to Brighton. I gave them cutlery and silver. Dear things, I hope they'll sit opposite each other at their own table and use them, but who can say?

Digby is just the reverse of George. Nothing can damp his belief in England and France and especially Russia, and he sees victories everywhere. This is more cheerful, although it is not, I am afraid, much nearer the actual truth. Still, it is better to live with. Digby is wiser than George in making himself busy. He is doing something for the war all day long and a good part of the night, and so is Margaret, who is on a number of Committees and never still for a moment. You know her restless managing way.

Digby's sister Ruth, perhaps you don't know, married an officer who is now at the front, and she is terribly anxious. They have two children.

All our kith and kin interests, you see, are with the Army. None with the Navy at all. But my medical man here has two sons with the Grand

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Fleet, and Sir Arthur Lynne, who lives next to us, has one son who is a lieutenant and who writes very interesting letters, which Lady Lynne brings in to read. So I keep in touch with both Services.

Here we knit, there being an endless supply of warm scarves, socks, etc., needed by the men in France and Flanders, where the cold and wet have been terrible. Anne is the manager of our local knitting industry and buys and distributes the wool and so forth, and forwards the things we have made to the right quarter. She is a dear good girl and I am fortunate in being able to retain her; but what the men are about not to snap her up I can't think. Still, there are now very few men with any time to make love, and Richard tells me that there will soon be fewer, for conscription is sure to come in. Of course there are elderly men, but I don't want to see our dear Anne married to a man much older than herself. It may work all right for a few years, but then he would get older and she younger—or at any rate not older at the same rate, not indeed old at all—and trouble would begin.

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Fifty-five and twenty-five are not impossible, but add ten years and where are you? Sixty-five and thirty-five don't do at all.

In addition to our knitting we tried two Belgians, but they were not a success. A man and his wife. The trouble was that there was a prejudice against his doing any work, for fear it would be depriving some Englishman of bread, and that made him idle, and being idle, the poor fellow got a little too fond of the bottle. No doubt he was no teetotaller in his own country, which I visited with Henry on our honeymoon, and I still have a piece of lace that he bought for me (he was always so generous) at Malines, and a glass paper-weight with a view of Brussels. It was from Brussels that we went to Germany, and met quite a number of people whom I thought nice and friendly then, but who perhaps were only wolves in sheep's clothing after all. Monsieur Blanc, our Belgian, may not have been a teetotaller in his own country, but he had not been used to our strong spirits, and they were too much for him, and in course of time we had to get rid both of him and his wife. They had, as Anne

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said, ceased to be refugees, and become Belgians again.

Beyond a few contributions to charities, which are likely to be added to, I think, this is all I can be said to be doing for the war. I wish it was more.

My rheumatism does not get any better, but it is all I have to complain of, except old age. Thank God, I can still see and hear.

I hope you are well, dear Emmie.—Your loving sister, VICTORIA

LXXXVIII

RICHARD HAVEN TO LADY STARR

MY DEAR HELEN,—So many people having told me that no wise man would let another day go by without a passport, I have taken the first step to obtain one. Because I might have to go to France, and nothing is so certain as that without a passport I could not do so. Not all the millions of Henry Ford could get me there lacking that piece of paper. And that reminds me—

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you had better gets yours too, because Toby may have to go out at any time, and if he was hit, and you wanted to hurry over to see him, you could not do so without it.

Getting a passport nowadays requires two things, neither of them very popular with me: patience and a mirror. The patience is to enable you to support all the delays to which the new regulations lead; the mirror is to enable you to fill up the form.

The form begins with age. Not difficult, even if unpalatable to fill up. Next, profession. This, too, is moderately easy. Tinker, barrister, what you will. Height is a question of fact which can be ascertained, although the ascertainment is not simple. It usually means being surrounded by a crowd at a railway station while you measure yourself, or, for more privacy, a Turkish bath, and that is costly and takes time. Next comes a really hard one—forehead. Even a mirror is difficult here. How to describe one's forehead? What kind of word? Sir Oliver Lodge and Mr. Hall Caine would do it simply enough: lofty and bulging. Bill Sikes would do it simply enough:

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low and receding. But ordinary people? Honestly I have no notion what my forehead is or how to convey its character to the authorities. Perhaps the best word, although cowardly, is medium. Next come the eyes; and here the quicksilver assists. My eyes, after careful and not unpleasing investigation, I discover to be a mixture of blue, grey, and green. I, therefore, fill in the space with the words blue, grey, and green, omitting as too subtle minutiæ the little brown spots which, I learn, are also to be seen fitfully there.

Now for the index of the face, the nose. This being the first thing about a countenance which most observers see and the last that they retain in mind, I must be careful. It would be horrid to be kept waiting at Boulogne pier all day, and worse, to be sent back by the next boat, because my description was inaccurate. Here one needs the threefold mirror which I find at the hatter's, for the profile view is valuable. In default of that I hazard "large and Roman." Next, the mouth. I have no more words for my mouth than for my forehead. My mouth is probably

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not repulsive, but the sleuth-hounds gathered at Boulogne want something more definite than that. I examine it with care. Is it large? No. Is it small? No. Is it well cut? Of course, but that doesn't matter. Finally I fall back on the assistance of our old friend "medium." Then comes chin. Here, alas! my path is only too clear, and I sadly place a solitary numeral against it and pass on: 2. Then colour of hair: dark brown. The complexion. At first I wrote "ruddy," but recalling old stories in the pink papers where this adjective does such noble service as a synonym for another adjective with no tendency to anæmia, I withdrew it and substituted "healthy."

And now comes the most stubborn question of all—face. How can one answer such a query? Face? I have no notion what the authorities expect. Obviously I have a face, because I have just been analysing it for them. The gluttons!—having been told all about my face, piece by piece, they still want to know what my face is like. I subject its reflection to the minutest study. Is it abnormal in any way? Certainly not. Is it excessive? No. Is it pretty? No. Is it

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symmetrical? No. Is it handsome? That is not for me to say, nor would what I should say be evidence. Is it—why yes, of course, it is clean-shaved. That, at any rate, is distinctive. So I simply say "clean shaved." One more question and we are at the end. "Any special peculiarities?" Ah! There are of course several. Very remarkable air of intelligence. Lights up with fascinating radiance. Has a sui-generisity not to be put in words. Any or all of these replies I could have put. Instead, I left it blank. And so, the great task was done.

But don't think to be much nearer France because these awkward questions have been answered. Much more yet lies before the intrepid traveller. To begin with, he must be photographed—always to me a painful process, and one that I have not indulged in for many years. But new regulations change old habits, and off I went to a photographer. Not an artist—oh dear, no. Not a refined manipulator of lights and shades and lenses, who can make even a dentist poetical and a real poet like a map of the moon, and charge accordingly; but a practical while-

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you-wait man over a shop in the Strand, who asks only half a crown and gives you wrinkles and "valises" rather than removes them. The whole thing did not take more than ten minutes, and I came away the richer by two alleged likenesses of myself, so awful that if I really accepted them as veracious I either would cut my throat or some other person's; and thus armed I set out on the search for a magistrate or barrister or doctor who would sign my papers, and have enough hardihood or credulity to state, on the back of one of the photographs, that it represented me and no one else. And here my path became easy, for barristers are, to me, as common as German victories, in Germany.

So that is done. But I don't get a passport for some days, and then maybe I shall never use it.

And I now repeat that you, with a husband in France and a son soon to be there, ought to go through a similar ordeal. Digby is going to.—Yours, R.

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LXXXIX

John Lastways to Lady Starr

Dear Aunt Helen,—You are absolutely a top-hole aunt. It is a grand idea, and Crosbie, one of the fellows here, says that a fiver is all that is necessary, and there's a place at Chelsea. Thank you ever so much. We break up on December 21.—Your affectionate nephew,

John Lastways

XC

Captain Derrick to His Wife

My Dearest,—English women—those who are serious, I mean—are thorough enough in their work for the war, but from what I hear from a French officer with whom I have struck up a friendship, the French women are even more so, for over here there is that wonderful institution the marraine. A marraine is literally a god-mother. Her special duty is to take charge of, and be responsible for, a poilu both in action and

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on leave. The soldiers, of course, come from all parts of France, but many of them, when they get leave, as they do far less often than our men, get it only for Paris, where possibly they have no friends. It is then that the marraine comes in. She meets him at the station, finds a lodging, provides pocket-money, takes him to the cinema, and so forth. When the soldier is at the front she sends him parcels of food and clothes and cheers him with letters. In England, no doubt, all this is done too, but not on such a scale. The comic papers, of course, have taken it up and made play with its obviously frivolous side; but the marraine is a serious and splendid fact all the same.

I keep fit.

Love to the Infinitesimals. T.

XCI

Mrs. Clayton-Mills to Mrs. Wiston

Dear Joan,—Poor Archibald has again failed. He was driving a car alone for the first time,

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along the Madeira Road, when he ran into a boat which had been placed there because of a high tide, and he was severely shaken. Of course boats ought not to be on roads. They are the last thing that a motorist expects to have to avoid, and I feel very much for him. As Archibald said, he had not been taught not to avoid boats. The worst of it is that in addition to the cost of repairing both the boat and the car—and I am sure the Corporation should really pay for both—the poor boy's nerve has temporarily gone. After a few weeks' rest he means, however, to try as a stretcher-bearer somewhere. Anything, he says, that will help to relieve suffering. Meanwhile he is bracing himself with a good tonic at Crowborough, where there is still a little golf.—Your loving MAUDE

XCII

NANCY BERNAL TO JERRY HARDING

MY DARLING JERRY,—I have your sweet letter, but what you don't see is that I should love you

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twice as much if you were wounded and needed looking after. That's the point of marriage—"in sickness or in health!"

My suggestion is that we make a compromise. Let us be married by special licence directly you come back on leave. I will find out all about it and do everything, even to getting the ring. All you have to do is to telegraph when you are coming. You will see then how fitted I am to be a soldier's wife. Do write agreeing to this.

I shall not tell mother just yet. Father is sure to be on my side whatever happens.—Your loving and ever more loving NAN.

XCIII

MRS. HAVEN TO RICHARD HAVEN

MY DEAR RICHARD,—As usual I want your advice. With so much talk as to the need for economy, I feel that I ought to be doing more than I have done. Already I have changed our tea, and instead of the Invalid Blend of China which I used to take, and which you always liked

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so much, at 3s. 4d., I now have one at 2s. 8d. A cheaper coffee too and chicory with it. Then I have stopped the *Sphere* and the *Guardian;* but the *Church Times* I cannot give up, especially as I pass it on afterwards, and *Punch*, which I always send to New Zealand to your Aunt Emmie. It is hard to give up the *Sphere*, but the servants take the *Daily Sketch*, and I can see the war pictures there whenever I want to. "C.K.S.'s" valuable guide to literary thought is, of course, a loss, but one must try to bear it. *Country Life* I have given up too, and so we can no longer play at choosing a new home as we used to. Instead of four books a week from the Library, we now are to have only two, and I am continually turning down the gas and removing lumps of coal from the fires, while we never have fish *and* meat any more, but either one or the other. So you see I have tried.

But all the same I feel that there is still much that ought to be done, and I am now writing to ask you if you think I ought to part with Ellen? It is, I know, a small house for three maids, and yet they always seem to have enough to do.

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Anne and I have talked it over and have decided that we would try to assist Sarah and Julia sufficiently to make up the deficiency if Ellen goes. What do you advise? Her wages are £26 a year, and her food and washing come, I suppose, to 12s. a week more, at least.

Those are the principal things. There are also lots of little domestic problems. For example, a new dress. One can of course do without new dresses. It is impossible to say truthfully that a dress is ever really worn out. Ought one to have a new one? But I am most concerned about Ellen.—Your loving MOTHER

XCIV

LADY STARR TO A PRISONER IN GERMANY

DEAR SIR,—I have drawn your name as that of a British prisoner in Germany; but now that I sit down to write to you I find I have nothing to say, not knowing what the censor does with such correspondence. I am therefore, instead of writing letters to you, ordering three or four papers

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to be sent to you every week. If you would prefer others let me know.—Your sincere friend,

HELEN STARR

XCV

RICHARD HAVEN TO MRS. HAVEN

MY DEAR MOTHER,—Before I can advise as to Ellen, please answer two questions:

1. What are you going to do with the money you save by dismissing Ellen?

2. What is Ellen going to do when she is dismissed?

I am not sure but that we must give the Kaiser a statue, after all, as the man who rendered poverty no disgrace. For that is what is going to happen in England: people who hitherto have been terrified of displaying the true paucity of their means will be able to do so without shame. In fact, I foresee a time when we shall compete in economy as we now do in ostentation, to the great joy of the naturally parsimonious. Some day England under penury may even become so

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sensible as to force its shopkeepers to sell those small portions of housekeeping material which the French understand but which until now we have been too snobbish for.

My own principal economy, so far, is the giving up of wine. This I hate, but I feel it is right to do so. Life for the moment is hardly worth living; but I shall get used to water in time and then, I suppose, wonder how I ever cared so much for those other costly fluids.—Your loving son,

RICHARD

XCVI

MRS. HAVEN TO RICHARD HAVEN

MY DEAR RICHARD,—As to your two questions, I really don't know exactly what I should do with the money saved by dismissing Ellen. To be quite frank, I am very stupid about money altogether, and have not yet realised what is to become of any of the money saved from the things that we have cut down; but we felt that we must cut down or not be patriotic. All I know

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is that the new tea is not at all nice, and that we get through two books so quickly that for half the week there is now nothing to read; but I suppose such privations are good for us, and certainly I don't complain. Indeed, when I think of the sacrifices our men are making in France, there is nothing in self-denial that I don't want to try, and Anne too.

Would not Ellen's wages, etc., go to make shells? That is, of course, if I knew where to send it. Or ought I to put it by for a rainy day?

I had not given any thought to your second question. Poor Ellen, I should not like her to be homeless.—Your loving MOTHER

XCVII

MRS. BERNAL TO LADY STARR

DEAR HELEN,—Our Belgians get more and more difficult. Monsieur goes out every morning to look for work, but who wants portraits painted nowadays? He comes back to lunch punctually enough and is then off again, usually borrowing

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a few shillings from Digby, to be repaid when the war is over. He gives receipts for the money with so much dignified ceremony that one cannot doubt the honesty of his intentions, but we can't think of him as anything but needy in Belgium too. Digby has enough I.O.U.'s, as he says, to paper the hall. I tell him it is a folly to go on without making inquiries, but he won't be hard enough or sensible enough to do so. My own troubles, apart from having to listen to Madame's interminable mournful chatter, begin at dinner, when Monsieur, after a glass or so of wine, tells perfectly awful stories such as are usually kept till the ladies leave the room. The result is that I have not let Nancy dine at home for quite a long time. Poor Digby's French is so simple and restaurant-like that he doesn't understand enough to stop him, even if he could be so firm.—Yours,

MARGARET

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XCVIII

Richard Haven to Mrs. Haven

My dearest Mother,—The idea of economy is to have more money in the country for the Government to call on if the war lasts a long time. It is now costing some millions a day and this money must be found somehow. The less we spend now, the more there will be later; and the thing to do is to keep on putting a little into the War Loan.

But I think you would be acting wrongly if you got rid of Ellen except to pass her on at once to a richer employer than yourself. From what I know of your investments they are fairly safe, and you are less in need of pinching than many of us.

Since becoming a teetotaller I am horrified to observe how much other people drink. It is probably not really much—no more than I used to take myself—but from this new eminence of rectitude it looks enormous.

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Take care of your precious self in this treacherous weather.—Your loving R.

XCIX

Lady Starr to Violet Wiston

My dear Vi,—I want to tell you that at a Christmas week party at the Souths, with great presence of mind I invented a new game. You know my reputation for being so quick and clever! Well, Mrs. South challenged me to do so, and I was equal to the occasion. Even as she spoke, by some bewildering miracle an idea suddenly entered my head. "Why not play at 'Sister Susie'?" I said.

"You don't mean more sewing?" Mrs. South replied in terror.

"No, no," I explained, seeing daylight as I talked. "First we want twenty-six little bits of paper. Will some one tear them up? Then on these we write the letters of the alphabet. Then they are put in a hat and shaken up, and we take out one each in turn. As there are twelve of us

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we shall have two each, and two of us will have three each, to make the twenty-six. Is that all clear?"

They said it was as clear as mud, and I went through it again with the crystal clarity of a teacher of one of those advertised systems which impart a perfect knowledge of Russian in three lessons.

"Then," I said, "you take a sheet of paper and fill up a line for each of your two (or it may be three) letters, in the manner of the famous Sister Susie line which I am told is sung wherever the sun never sets:

'Sister Susie's sewing shirts for soldiers,'

that is to say," I added, absolutely aghast at my own ability and aptitude, "that supposing you had A you might write:

'Auntie Ann is asking aid for Asquith,'

or if B:

'Bertha's boiling bully beef for Belgians.'

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It must be alliterative; it must be as much in the metre of the Sister Susie line as possible; and it must have reference to the war."

The company having intimated that this also was as clear as mud, I repeated it.

"But what about X?" a rather pretty girl asked.

"Yes, and Z?" asked some one else.

"I felt sure there would be some defect in the game," I replied. "We are only feeling our way, you see. We had better leave them out."

"Oh no," said Mrs. South's Aunt Eliza, "let's have them."

This old lady, it seems, spends quite half of her life in guessing acrostics and anagrams, and doing all kinds of competitions in the papers in order to win £500, and the difficulties of writing-games are food and drink to her.

Then the inevitable happened.

"Oh, but I can't play this," said one guest who had just begun to grasp its character. You know how there is always some one who shies at any game with a pencil in it.

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"I'm sure I can't," somebody else said. "I'm hopelessly stupid."

Ten minutes having passed in fighting to retain them, during which time a third and fourth lost courage and fell out too, we settled down to the hat with only eight players. That is to say, we were each to have three letters, and Aunt Eliza and I, being the most gifted, were to share X and Z.

We were just beginning when the rather pretty girl wanted to know how we were to manage about relationships. " 'Sister Susie' is all right," she said, "and 'Aunt Alice' and 'Cousin Connie,' but there aren't any more unless we say 'Father Freddy' and 'Mother Molly' and 'Brother Bertie' and 'Uncle Ulrich.' "

"We couldn't have Ulrich, because that would be trading with the enemy!" I brightly said.

It was therefore decided to cut out relationships and begin with the girls' names right away.

And so we started, five minutes being allowed. I saw at once that Z was useless. Zoe and Zuleika could be found easily enough, but there was nothing to set them to do. No verbs. I

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therefore concentrated on my other letters, which were U and J, and with infinite agonies produced:

"Jessie's jams and jellies go to Jellicoe,"

and

"Ursula's unpacking urns for Uskub."

Mrs. South came out strong with C:

"Connie's cooking Coldstream captain's curry,"

and Molly's G was very passable:

"Gertie's growing goosegogs for the Ghurkas."

Y, which fell to Bertie South, was ingenious:

"Yolande's yoking yaks for yelling yeomen."

I need hardly say that Aunt Eliza played it best. Aunts always do play this kind of game best. Her three letters were P, S, and X. The first two she rendered thus:

"Pamela pots poisoned prunes for Potsdam,"

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and

"Sally's singing Saint-Saens' songs to Serbians."

"But what about X?" we demanded.

"X isn't really possible," she said. "Xantippe is the only name, and there are no verbs for her. So

'X X-pounds X-rays to X-lieutenants'

is all I can do."

There—that's enough of this frivolous stuff.

It would be a very poor war out of which the shopkeepers could make nothing. I walked up Bond Street yesterday thinking of Christmas presents, and really it is wonderful to see the gilt-edged things with which to tempt officers, or, more properly, to tempt the friends of officers wishing to give them things. Of course, smoking equipments come first. Everything is in either gold or silver; which shows what a lot of money there still is in the country. Then there are the elaborate wrist watches, more like those of actresses than warriors; and the cases containing knives and forks and so forth, in the most

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lovely leather. And the wonderful safety razors also in gold and silver. It all reminded me of the campaign accessories belonging to Napoleon which you see at the Invalides and the Carnavalet. But then he was Napoleon!—Your affectionate

AUNT HELEN

C

CAPTAIN DERRICK TO HIS WIFE

[*Telegram*]

HAVE been hit. Nothing much. Don't worry. Writing. DERRICK

CI

PORTIA GREY TO TOBY STARR

DEAR MR. STARR,—or perhaps I ought to call you Lieutenant?—You see you are the only soldier that I know, except a wounded man here, to whom I read the paper every day. But he is

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not an officer. He lives near us, with his mother, and having had his eyes injured he cannot read. His favourite paper is the *Mirror*, and he wants it all, and I even have to describe the pictures of W. K. Haselden. I had no idea it was so difficult to pass on the fun of a picture to one who can't see; and even now I don't know if I do it successfully, for he is so polite that he would laugh anyway. He loves those paragraphs about actresses in swagger restaurants, and he is revelling in the serial story more than I am. I literally begin at the beginning of the paper and go right through; and when it comes to the racing I have to read the names of the horses first and then he guesses the winners, and afterwards he guesses "what price" they were. I expect you, being a man, know what this means. I didn't. His knowledge of horses seems to me wonderful, and he can tell me the owners' and trainers' names of nearly every one.

I offered him lots of books, but he likes papers best.

I had a funny experience the other day. I came down in the train with a whole carriageful

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of bluejackets. There were just two of us in the carriage at Charing Cross, a woman and I, and then all these men crowded in at the last minute. The woman gave a little scream and hurried out, and I was left alone with them. They were so nice and jolly. I think they had all had a drop, but they couldn't have been more courteous. Every one of them was either being courteous or pitching into the others for not being so—for talking too freely or doing something to incommode the young lady. And then they passed round a bottle, and it had just begun its round when one of them, an Irishman, asked how they could be so rude as not to offer it first to me. So although I said I didn't want any, the owner of the bottle took out a new handkerchief and wiped it with the greatest care, and begged me to take a little refreshment. I hated to hurt them by refusing, but I couldn't bear the smell of it. There was a little sailor next to me who said his ship was going out to the Persian Gulf, and he would send me some pearls and lace if I would give him my address, and I promised to send him a paper every week.

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What a difference there is between sailors and soldiers! I have often been on the platform when a train full of soldiers came in, and they have made me so uncomfortable with their remarks. It's only their excitement, I know, but it isn't any the less uncomfortable for that. But these sailors were so thoughtful and respectful, as though I were made of china or all over bloom. Perhaps it's the sea makes them simpler and more tender. Please don't think I don't admire soldiers. I do. I admire them immensely. But somehow I should feel happier being alone with sailors. Soldiers seem to be getting into such a bold, possessive way, as though women had only to be whistled to.—Yours sincerely,

PORTIA GREY

CII

CAPTAIN DERRICK TO HIS WIFE

MY DEAREST,—I dictate this to my nurse, who is a peach. I am at Boulogne and absolutely on velvet. Some shrapnel smashed my left arm:

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nothing more serious than that, and every one is hopeful that it may be saved. I don't want you to come over. Wait for me; I shall be back in a little while for a nice long holiday. Thank Heaven it's the left arm, because I shall be able to fish. Also, in a day or so, to write to you.

Kiss the Minutiæ for me and tell them to send me a line. TERENCE

CIII

MISS HERMIONE HUNTRESSE TO HER OLD SCHOOLFELLOW, NANCY BERNAL

DARLING NANCY,—I want you to be a dear and promise to cut anything that you have, in order to go with me to the Bayswater Barracks on Sunday evening. There is to be a performance for the Tommies, and we are one short in the chorus for a song that Gertie Millar is going to do. I have promised to find some one, and naturally want you. There's no need to be able to sing or anything: you just have to wear a pretty frock and show all your 32 pearlies. The

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frocks are being made at Davidoff's. I'll call for you any time you like and take you there: I have learned to drive, and I have the duckiest little two-seater you ever saw.

It will be great fun, because there's to be supper afterwards, and you shall sit near George Graves, who always makes me die.

Say you'll come, there's a pet.—Yours everly,

HERMIONE

P.S.—By the way, I wish you'd give me Toby's address. He seems to have passed off the map.

CIV

LADY STARR TO MRS. LASTWAYS

DEAREST JOAN,—The great joke here is Mrs. Bonsor, who before the war had always posed as a great cosmopolitan and had been to Trouville or Étrétat every summer, and to Le Touquet for golf every spring, and to Aix or Homburg every autumn, and to Nice or Mentone or even Monte Carlo (Monty she calls it) every winter, and had

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led us to suppose that she could speak French like a native. Well, it now turns out that the only native whose fluency resembles hers is an oyster, for on the arrival of her elderly Belgian couple—an old gentleman and his wife, very bewildered—she had to send for me in despair to help her out. The dear creatures, she explained, used a patois, and that was beyond her. What they wanted she could not grasp, but it was evidently something very important. To me their words sounded just like French. The whole trouble was simply this—that Mrs. Bonsor had given them a room with two little beds, and the poor old things wanted one big one. Nothing else. They had slept together for nearly half a century and wished to continue to do so. Well, they are happy now.

But I don't envy them in that house. Why can't people be more honest? Why pretend to know French if they don't? Retribution is bound to follow. Perhaps the war will knock some of such foolishness to pieces. I hope so.—Yours,

H.

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CV

Mrs. Haven to Richard Haven

My dear Richard,—Thank you very much for your wise advice, but I am happy to say that it came too late to be needed. We are overjoyed, for what do you think? Sarah, Julia, and Ellen all came up to me together last night, and said that they each wished to take £10 a year less wages during the war. And they had no idea either that I had been thinking of dismissing Ellen! It was wonderful, quite like an answer to prayer. At first I refused, but they were very firm about it and really wanted to "do their bit," as they said, and so it is arranged now that they each take £8 less.

War prisoners in Germany and Holland have now been distributed among us, to write to. I have one, Anne has another, and Ellen has induced me to let her have one too. I should not be surprised if she wrote the best letters of the lot.—Your loving Mother

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CVI

Miss Hermione Huntresse to Nancy Bernal

My darling Nancy,—Don't be absurd. Of course it won't cost as much as that, because we're all economising, but we must do what we can for the Tommies, and it would be very rough on them if we all looked dowds and frumps. I promise you that everything all told shan't come to more than twelve guineas, and you can, of course, use them again and again. I shall be awfully disappointed if you say no.—Yours everly,

Hermione

CVII

Toby Starr to Richard Haven

Dear Uncle Richard,—I can't say how soon we shall have to go. It may be at once; and really I hope so, for hanging about is nervous work and I want to know the worst.

I make as brave a show as I can, and when I

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get to town swagger about and look in the shops, but I can't for more than a few minutes at a time get rid of the feeling that there is some awful doom awaiting me. It is just like the old dread of the dentist, only much worse. I wake up in the night and shiver. There is, I suppose, no other word for it than funk, and yet I don't believe it is exactly funk either, because I never have any doubt about going through with it. Or if it is funk, it is just the funk that every one must have in thinking of the possibility of death. The rum thing is that I had never thought of death before, except of other people's, and then very casually. But when one reads the lists and then realises that in a few hours one may be in the midst of it all, why then I sweat ice. I wonder if all the other men I see are the same. I dare say that when once I get out there in the thick of it, and my blood is up, I shan't bother. There ought to be a drug for waiting subs to take!

Our men have got a song which they sing in unison whenever the time hangs heavy. It is to one of those dreary tunes—an old hymn tune, as a matter of fact—that they all like best, and it

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would make the hair of the ordinary excited person who thinks of every soldier as just spoiling to get at the enemy, curl.

This is one verse:

When I put civilian clothes on
Oh, how happy I shall be!
When this bloody war is over
No more soldiering for me!

However long I live I shall hear this being sung. People say that "Tipperary" is the National Anthem of the Army. But it isn't. This hymn is.—Your affectionate TOBY

CVIII

MRS. HAVEN TO AN UNKNOWN BRITISH PRISONER IN GERMANY

MY DEAR BRAVE FRIEND,—I am sending you a box of things which I hope will be useful to you if you ever get them. But we are told so much about parcels not reaching prisoners that I have serious doubts. If you can, I hope you will

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let me know, and tell me also if there is anything you would rather have than the things I have put in. *The Golden Treasury* is in case you have nothing to read and like poetry. It is a book that I have found it possible to read again and again, but of course it may be tedious to you, since tastes differ and I don't know anything about yours. No doubt some one else might like it if you don't. But if you do like it I will send the second part, although it is not so good as the first. If you would rather have stories, say so, and I will send you some long ones like *Monte Cristo*. The puzzles are to help to pass the time. The bits of string and safety-pins will probably be useful.

I don't send any cake because it would go bad, but I have sent shortbread instead, because that keeps a long time and can be made fresh by warming. I send some tea too, and a patent spoon which makes a cup at a time and does not waste. I want you particularly to tell me whether or not you get these things, because there are stories here of the Germans intercepting all food and

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eating it themselves. I always thought of them as a greedy, even gluttonous people, with very unpleasant table manners, although I must also be fair and say that my late husband and I had some friends among them. That, however, was a long time ago, and most things have changed for the worse since then.

I do not write more to-day because I have no notion what you are like, except that you are one of our brave soldiers. You see, a number of us were asked if we would write to prisoners and you fell to me. But if you answer this letter I shall know more, and then writing will be easier. —Believe me, your sincere well-wisher,

(Mrs.) Victoria Haven

CIX

George Wiston to Digby Bernal

Dear Digby,—The conspiracy of silence under which we now live is monstrous. The truth can always be faced: it is these half-truths and evasions and downright lies that are sapping the

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country's strength. A well-informed man in the club to-day told me that there is nothing but disaffection among our men at the front, and often open mutiny. The Staff does nothing but play cards and philander. This was not a mere idle rumour-bearer either—a type that I deplore—but one with friends of behind-the-scenes knowledge. What will become of us? I can see no hope unless some clear-sighted, vigorous, independent man, such, say, as Lord Northcliffe, is put at the head of affairs.

If you see a letter in the papers to-morrow to this effect, signed "True Patriot," you will know who wrote it.—Yours cordially,

GEORGE WISTON

CX

CAPTAIN DERRICK TO HIS WIFE

MY DEAREST,—Excuse pencil.

Your letters are a great joy.

I am getting along all right, but there's a fear that my arm may have to be operated on. It's

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too much cut about to be healthy. I will keep you informed.

This is a topping hospital, and my day nurse is an angel. Why she is a nurse at all I can't imagine, for she's desperately pretty and ought long ago to have been snapped up and by now be a mother. She'd make a jolly one. But there is a kind of pretty girl that doesn't marry, and perhaps she's one of them. She has pretty hands too, and they're never so pretty as when she is holding up the thermometer to read it, or measuring medicine. I started to say something of this kind to her the other day, but then, realising that every patient must have done it before, I stopped. Anyway, I guess she knew that her hands were seen to advantage then even before any one mentioned it.

I wouldn't mind a few books. The *Irish R.M.* series I should love to read again.—Your loving

TERENCE

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CXI

Ellen Frisby, Parlour-Maid to Mrs. Haven, to a Prisoner in Holland

Dear Sir,—The lady I live with has permitted me to open up correspondence with one of our brave lads in prison, and I therefore write to you in the hope that a letter may cheer you up. Please answer it if it does, and then I will write again.

Every one in England is singing "Keep the home fires burning," and that is what we are all trying to do for you. It is a lovely melody, and I wonder if you have it over there. Another very nice new song is called "A little bit of Heaven," and another, "I couldn't believe it." If you are fond of music you will like these when you come back. Or perhaps you have a gramophone. I am sure I have read bits in the papers about gramophones in prison camps.

Living at Aylesbury I don't often get a chance to see a play, but I went to my married sister's at Hither Green last month, and one night we saw "Mr. Wu." It is very terrible, all about a wicked

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Chinaman who gets an Englishwoman into his power. I hope I shall never go to China, but that is not likely.

We have the pictures here, of course, and I go there regularly on my night out. Charlie was there last week. He is funny. It was in a piece called "Charlie at the Bank," where he saves the bank from thieves and marries the beautiful lady clerk; but it is all a dream, and really the cashier marries her. I am not sure that I like these haves very much, but this one was so comic I couldn't help laughing. This week we had a film with Hazel Dawn in it. She is a sweet creature. But cook says that Mary Pickford is the real one, and my brother Bert says so too. But she hasn't been to Aylesbury yet. I wonder if you have seen her.

The house where I am parlour-maid belongs to Mrs. Haven, an old lady. I am very fond of her.

—Your well-wisher, ELLEN FRISBY

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CXII

LADY STARR TO MRS. PARK-STANMER

[*Telegram*]

WILL meet you Friday, Marshall's, one.

HELEN

CXIII

MRS. PARK-STANMER TO MAJOR THISTLETON

DEAR MAJOR THISTLETON,—I have an engagement for lunch in town on Friday, but as that is your only day I will break it. Expect me at the Carlton at 1.15.—Yours sincerely,

AMABEL PARK-STANMER

CXIV

MRS. PARK-STANMER TO LADY STARR

[*Telegram*]

VERY sorry impossible meet you to-morrow after all. Writing.

AMABEL

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CXV

Mrs. Park-Stanmer to Lady Starr

My Dear,—I was heart-broken to have to telegraph putting you off, but Reggie suddenly developed a temperature and I dared not leave him. He is much better to-day, you will be glad to know. Life is a dreary business here—just the same old round.—Your disappointed

Amabel

CXVI

Captain Derrick to his wife

My Dearest,—Don't worry; but there's no hope for it, my arm has got to come off; indeed, by the time you get this the operation will be over, and you will be a soldier's wife in earnest. Dear old girl, I am so sorry. The great thing is that it's only the left. My strong right arm—and it will probably be all the stronger now—is still at your service.

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Tell Bimbo. I should like to know how it affects him.—Your maimed but devoted

TERENCE

CXVII

PRIVATE ERNEST BANKS (IN GERMANY) TO LADY STARR

YOUR LADYSHIP, DEAR MADAM,—I hope as I address you right, but I never wrote to a Lady before and never expected to. I think you hit on a fine notion in sending papers instead of letters, for letters can't mean much unless they have home news in them. My mother writes regularly, and so does a brother of mine at Wigan, who would be fighting only he has tuberkuloses, and they tell me what I want to know, unless it is about the war, when it is all blacked out. I would take it as a favour, while thanking you, My Lady, all the same, if you would send me *Reynolds's* instead of the *Weekly Times*, and one or two comics instead of *Punch*. A mate of mine who hasn't any friends would like *John Bull*, if

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that is not making too bold.—Wishing you God's blessing, I remain, yours respectfully,

ERNEST BANKS

CXVIII

MRS. RICHARD BERNAL TO HER HUSBAND

MY DEAREST DICK,—The most wonderful thing has happened, and now it is more important than ever that you keep your dear head down in the trenches and come back safe and sound.

One of his names must be Richard, both after you and Uncle Richard. The other we can think out together. I feel perfectly fit, and am your adoring wife, OLIVE

CXIX

MISS HERMIONE HUNTRESSE TO NANCY BERNAL

DARLING NANCY,—You were very foolish not to come to our show. Our song was topping, and we were encored again and again. Every one was there except the Tommies. It seems that there

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had been some case of insubordination or something, and the Colonel stopped them; but as the performers had made all their plans, and the supper was ordered, and so forth, we just went through with it for the officers and their and our friends. The Tommies are more fun, of course, because they shout out such weird things. I had frightfully good luck, for I sat at supper between George Graves and Nelson Keys, and they both said that no professional could make up more cleverly than I did. Really it must be great fun to be on the stage, they're all so jolly; and it's so splendid of them to wear themselves out like this for the Tommies.

I shall count on you for next time. There are some tableaux in the offing.—Yours everly,

HERMIONE

CXX

RICHARD HAVEN TO BARCLAY VAUGHAN

DEAR B.,—Having half an hour to kill while waiting for a train, I examined a picture post card

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shop close to the station and was interested by the change in them and their general tone. The comic cards have taken on a new breadth since the war and now and then throw back to Rowlandson and Gilray. A rather rough-and-ready type of man being at the moment, to us, the most important creature on earth, everything is being done for him, and that is the kind of humour he is supposed to like. This is natural enough and there is no great harm in it, but it is not pretty, and it lowers women just at a time when they are rising, in all directions, above mere playthings and chattelry.

Of course anti-German jokes are very prominent. An ingenious one is a post card, all over stamps and post marks, addressed

"H.M. The Kaiser,
Hôtel d'Angleterre,
Calais."

This address is crossed through and "Not found, Try Constantinople," "Left years ago, Try Berlin," and "Away, address uncertain, Try St. Helena," is scrawled over it. That American

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satire against the Kaiser, "Meinzelf und Gott," which appeared some years ago, has also been revived. Much of it is out of date, but the English in their search for laughter have never minded that. It begins:

Der Kaiser of dis Vaterlandt
Und gott on high, all dings command;
Ve two—ach! Doan't you underschtand?
Meinzelf—und gott.

Vile sóme men zing der power divine,
Mein soldiers zing "Der Wacht am Rhein"
Und drink der healt in German vine
Of Me—und gott.

Another card prints "A Certain Cure for the German Measles," which runs thus:

"Mix some Woolwich Powders with Tinct. of Iron or Essence of Lead, and administer in pills (or shells). Have ready a little British Army (a little goes a long way), some Brussels Sprouts, and French Mustard. Add a little Canadian Cheese and Australian Lamb and season with the best Indian Curry. Set it on a Kitchener and keep stirring until quite hot.

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"If this does not make the Patient perspire freely, rub the best Russian Bear's Grease on his chest and wrap in Berlin Wool.

"DR. CANNON'S PRESCRIPTION.

"*P.S.*—The Patient must on no account have any *Peace-Soup* until the swelling in the head has quite disappeared."

Here is another:

Special War News!!

RECIPE

HOW TO COOK A GERMAN SAUSAGE

Cook on a British Kitchener, use a Japan enamelled saucepan, Greece well with Russian tallow, flavour with a little Jellicoe; Servia up (Help!) with little French capers and Brussels scouts.

There are also comic histories of the Zeppelin scares, and so forth. I suppose that Berlin is similarly satirical and boastful as regards ourselves. It does not, I confess, impart much of a thrill to see a knot of young men laughing at this

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braggart stuff. But if Kitchener was right, as I believe he will turn out to be, they will all have to do more than exchange comic post cards before the end is gained.

Among the non-physical jokes is a card bearing a facsimile of a ten-shilling note and these words:

> Don't trouble to send me a post card,
> Don't bother to drop me a line,
> Just send me this in an envelope
> And I shall get on jolly fine.

—That should be popular.

When it comes to the final tussle, however, humour, I take it, never wins. Sentiment is always first, and the sentimental cards are many. There is a whole series, intensely popular, of a young soldier kissing his girl good-bye—photographed from life—with such quatrains as this:

> For a little while we must be parted,
> Duty calls, dear—I must do my share.
> Thoughts of home will gladden days of absence,
> And I know you're thinking of me there.

This is said by the warrior with his lips full on hers. I see that card being sent not only by

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those soldiers who have won the right to such intimacy, but by those who wish for it—and not to one girl only either.

And then there is also this, on a deeper note:

MY SON

To my dear son from whom I parted,
Son of Empire, lion-hearted,
Father's blessings I am sending
Knowing war has but one ending,
Darkness MUST give way to LIGHT,
TRUTH and RIGHT are always MIGHT.

—Yours, R. H.

CXXI

Nancy Bernal to Lady Starr

My dear Aunt Helen,—You ask for the latest news of all of us. Well, father goes on as usual, quite sure that everything will be all right and doing all kinds of "bits" for the war. He began, as you know, by being a Special Constable. Then he was a G.R., which some people call the Gorgeous Recks, as I expect you have heard.

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Others say that the letters stand for "Got Rheumatism"; and this was only too true in father's case, so he had to give it up and take to carpentry. He now spends all his odd time at a Hospital Supply Depôt making bed tables and crutches.

Our Belgians have at last gone, and this has at once united the family again and given it more time to be out.

As for mother, she is absolutely in her element, for she has got a new Fund Committee, with several really swagger people on it too. This makes her fourteenth, so you may guess we don't see much of her. The new Fund is to provide cigarette cases in which our brave boys may keep the cigarettes that are sent them, and some day, father says, there will be a further fund to provide bigger cases in which to keep those. But nothing shakes mother's purposefulness, and really we all ought to be delighted, for she is so busy that she never thinks of her health at all any more, except on Sundays.

I am afraid I am the only lazy one, although I still visit the canteens and am often selling things

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at bazaars or performances and even in the streets. Last week, for example, I sold Montenegrin flags on what was called "The Montenegro Flag Day." One old lady who bought one said that it would be much more effective if a few Montenegroes could process through London so that people could see the brave black fellows in the flesh. I ought to have my photograph in every number of the *Sketch* and *Tatler* as "interested in war charities"; but not being titled I don't.—Your loving niece,

NANCY

P.S.—Soon I may have some real news for you. I hope so.

CXXII

REGINALD BROOKES TO HIS FORMER SCHOOLFELLOW, JOHN LASTWAYS

DEAR LOBSTER,—I am having no end of a time here, and yesterday I took a machine up alone and was flying for half an hour. There's nothing like it, I tell you; motoring isn't in it. You don't

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want to do anything in the world but get off it, and be flying and flying. Eating and sleeping are just a bore. In fact, I can't sleep any more. I lie awake and wait for the dawn so as to be out again and get through my trials quickly, so that I can go to the front and do some real work, either at scouting or doing in the horrible Hun.

You really ought to come. No one made any bones about it when I said I was nineteen, but of course I look older than you. Still they're too keen on real tryers to worry much. If only you could square your mater! If you're not quick you won't find me here, because the very first moment I'm off to drop a few bombs on Little Willie or whoever comes my way.—Yours ever,

SNARKIE

CXXIII

LADY STARR TO NANCY BERNAL

MY DEAR NANCY,—Your postscript is very interesting. Tell me his name and all about him.

—Your loving AUNT HELEN

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CXXIV

Nancy Bernal to Lady Starr

My dearest Aunt Helen,—How horribly penetrating you are! It is Jerry Harding, Toby's friend. We have been engaged for an eternity—ever since last May—but no one knows yet except one or two. No one in the family except Uncle Richard, who has told me all about special licences.

Jerry is in France now, and I want to be married on his first leave; but he has an absurd idea that we ought to wait till the war is over. Dick and Olive didn't, so why should we? Anyhow, Uncle Richard is going to help us. He says there can't be too many marriages. Isn't that a lovely doctrine?—Yours devotedly,

Nancy

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CXXV

Richard Haven to Lady Starr

My dear Helen,—I had an experience yesterday which has made me think. I found myself in a third class carriage with a Canadian soldier on his way to London. As a rule I have found that the soldier who sits opposite one on railway journeys is an innutritious person, whether he has been at the front or not; and the truly cautious will avoid his eye, because too often his only desire is to talk. He is neither Ortheris nor Learoyd, and far indeed from that other of the great triumvirate, but for whom we should not, I suppose, expect even what we do from such travelling companions. The deception of literature once more!

Nor was this man food for the novelist, but he had a certain big simplicity and before we reached Charing Cross he was actually on my hands. To begin with, he was, as the slang phrase has it, "oiled"; which is a condition of alcoholic comfort well on this side of inebriety but conducive to an

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easy decline to that state. He was carrying on with the aid of two bottles of beer, one on each side, like John Gilpin, and the second so very "up" that when he opened it it made the carriage for a moment or two look like a snow-storm. Having finished what remained, after honourably inviting me to share it, he began to talk, but not being able to hear him I asked him to come over to my, the drier, end of the compartment.

"That's good," he said. "You can't hear *me*, and I can't see *you*." He had a Scotch accent with the least touch of France in it.

"How's that?" I asked, feeling that I already knew the answer, for I thought he was humorously referring to the effect of his potations. But he astonished and shocked me by replying in the one word "Gassed!" and I then noticed for the first time how wrong his poor eyes were.

He was a huge, powerful man, with a bronzed good-humoured face in which those stricken watery orbs were quite lost. He was also a mass of rheumatism from long exposure in the trenches up to his waist in mud; but he took it all

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philosophically. The doctor had told him he might recover his sight, but unfortunately he was a little on the old side. Fifty-one. He came from Canada, where he had left a farm and a wife. He had volunteered as thirty-nine. When such a scrap was on, how could he be out of it? He was to return to Shorncliffe the next day with his kit, which he was now on his way to town to fetch. It was at a house somewhere near Victoria, and he had no notion how to get there. Could I direct him?

Of the war he had little to say, except that things happened in war that were more horrible than the stay-at-home people would ever believe; and that to use gas wasn't playing the game. But the Germans, thank God, were getting very short of food, and very tired of fighting, and the end could not be far.

I need hardly say that he had lost his ticket, because that is the first thing a soldier does, even without the assistance of gas or oil. We spent the time between London Bridge and Charing Cross—and you know how long that can be—in hunting for it. His fingers being all

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thumbs and his clothes so tight on him that to get them into his pockets at all was a difficulty, I went through them for him. This shows either that I must suggest honesty or that he was abnormally trustful.

His pockets contained practically everything—the rubbish of months—except the ticket. Incidentally they contained a good deal of money—numbers of dirty pound notes in wads of half a dozen or so—and I warned him to separate them and be careful of them, and I also undertook to take him in a taxi to his address, an offer which he received with no enthusiasm whatever.

Having arranged matters at Charing Cross as regards the lost ticket (and there the British Army's indifference to scraps of pasteboard is so notorious that the collector was immediately ready with note-book and pencil), I steered him to a taxi, and asked for the Victoria address. But here he began to assert himself. A Canadian of fifty-one who called himself thirty-nine in order to be in the fun across the water was hardly the man to pass tamely through London from one

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terminus to another without any halt for refreshment by the way. We must first have a drink. I must name my poison—anything I liked, even champagne, although all that he craved was enough beer.

"But it can't be done," I told him. "There are regulations against it."

A look of inexpressible cunning came into his dazed and watery eyes. "I'm telling you it can be done," he said. "Listen. I'll give you the money outside. . . ."

I did what I could with him, but nothing would keep him in the cab. "I must have a drink," he said, "a long one. Beer," and he leaned out of the window and insisted on stopping at the next public-house.

It was useless to fight him further, and in a moment he would have been through the window; so I stopped at a flaming bar. But I made one more effort to help him. I would not come in, I said, but I would be back in ten minutes, and he must come along then. He affected to agree.

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On returning, I found him established among a band of admirers to whom he was handing shillings, and nothing would move him; so with the feeling that at any rate I had done my best, I abandoned him to his fate.

One can hardly expect the army to find caretakers for every one of these childish creatures; but it is depressing to thing of predatory London lying in wait for such natural prey. I had better, I thought, have picked his pockets of most of his money, as I could easily have done beneath the poor blind eyes and fuddled brain, and posted it to him at Shorncliffe the next day. But this brilliant thought, like so many of its kind, came too late.—Yours, R. H.

CXXVI

Private Arthur Coleman to Miss Ellen Frisby

Dear Miss,—Your letter came very welcome, for I have not had one for a long time, and that was to say my young lady as was had married a

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munition worker. Fickleness, I said, thy name is woman, but I don't somehow think that you are like that. 'There is something about your letter to me which seems to say that you would be true of heart.

What you say about the new songs is interesting. I love music. We have a gramophone here, as you guessed, but the records are very old and worn. I love the pictures too.

I can assure you, Miss Ellen, that we could do with the sight of a kind female face over here, where there are nothing but men, and they are Dutch. It would not matter so much if we had something to do, but often we go for days without a job.

Your address tickles me, because I once ate Aylesbury duck at a restaurant in London and that seems to bring you nearer. I wonder what you are like. If you are so kind as to write again, please tell me what you are like. How tall you are, what colour are your eyes, what colour is your hair. You might enclose your photo.—

Yours respectfully, ARTHUR COLEMAN

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P.S.—And how old you are? I know ladies don't like telling this, but perhaps you'll make an exception for a poor prisoner.

P.S. 2.—And if you have any one to walk out with.

CXXVII

Bimbo Derrick (aged 8) to his father, Captain Derrick

My dear Dad,—I am so sorry you will have only one arm, but I shall like helping you to do things. Please have an iron hook like Captain Hook in *Peter Pan*. He says every one ought to have one.

I had such a lot of presents on my birthday. Uncle Digby gave me a whole suit of Karky. Mr. Trower gave me a ripping cannon. Aunt Margaret gave me a box of soldiers. Cousin Nancy gave me a badge of your regiment. Nurse gave me a helmet. Mother gave me the *Pilgrim's Progress*. I have made myself a mask

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for gas. Teenie gave me a photograph frame and I have out General Joff in it.—Your loving son, BIMBO

CXXVIII

CAPTAIN DERRICK TO HIS WIFE

MY DEAREST,—Now that the operation is over and I am really getting better, I can't pretend to be anything but rather happy. God knows I would like another cut in at the Boches, and it is pretty ghastly to know that that is impossible, ever again, with only one arm; but on the other hand—that's a joke, I see now, but I didn't mean it for one—I must confess to rather a blessed feeling of relief that all those horrors I have been through are behind me—the noise and shells, the filth, the blood, the mud, the gas, and the sufferings which one hadn't time or opportunity to do anything for. I shall never forget it, and the nurses tell me that even now I am fighting half the night; but it's behind me all the same.

Being one-armed will be a bore, but not much

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more than a bare. At any rate, that's how I think of it when I get a visit from a poor devil upstairs who is led here at tea-time most days —a tall handsome young captain, full of money, who will never see again. The bullet took him sideways and went through both eyes. A big powerful fellow, with a very gentle expression, but whether he always had that, or whether it has come with blindness, as it so often seems to do, I don't know.

He comes in to tea and we compare notes. He's learning Braille as hard as he can, so as to be ready for the black life in front of him. My God, I wouldn't like to be blind!

Bimbo was very funny about Captain Hook. I'm not sure he isn't right. A hook would be useful. We must consider this.

Do all wounded men, I wonder, feel like falling in love with their nurses? I know I could, and I know equally that all her smiles and tendernesses in return would mean nothing more than a sweet professional kindness. Indeed, part of the pain of illness is the bitter knowledge that nothing can

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really touch these adored angelic mechanisms of mercy.

I shall soon be back now, my own.

Kisses to the whitebait. TERENCE

CXXIX

RICHARD HAVEN TO MRS. LASTWAYS

[*Telegram*]

JOHN safe at Devizes, returning with me. Writing. RICHARD

CXXX

TOBY STARR TO PORTIA GREY

DEAR MISS GREY,—Our lot have got marching orders at last. We cross on Tuesday, I believe, but shall not be in the firing line for a bit. Wish me good luck. Directly we get to France I am going to ask you a favour, but not before.—Yours sincerely, TOBY STARR

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CXXXI

Richard Haven to Mrs. Lastways

My dear Kate,—I hope my telegram comforted you. But there is nothing to be alarmed about. I have the impulsive warrior safely in hand. He had been inflamed by an old schoolfellow who had falsified his age and joined the flying corps, and John naturally wished to do the same. I don't blame him: do you? Still, as an elder, and his uncle, and your brother, I have delivered a lecture (in which I only faintly believe) on his conduct; but it was not exactly choked with convincing arguments, for the deceit of which he has been guilty is of the whitest, and any penitence that he might have felt disappeared this morning when he found in a paper a photograph of the Queen in smiling tolerance by the bedside of a wounded boy who had similarly overstated his age. Your claims upon him for a year or so longer he cannot begin to understand, being in a state of excitement that puts motherland before mother

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—particularly as motherland needs aviators and mother doesn't.

All the same he is coming back prepared to resume his studies, if the schoolmaster will have him. As he is not at Radley, possibly he will.

Don't be too hard on him. It is of such stuff that heroes are made.—Yours, R. H.

CXXXII

Portia Grey to Toby Starr

Dear Mr. Starr,—I hope this will catch you before you sail. It is just to say that I shall think of you continually and hope for you to come back safe and sound, and to ask you to telegraph an address as soon as you can. Father says that he hopes, when you get your leave, that you will give us a call at Ashford.

I can't imagine what the favour can be.—Yours sincerely, Portia Grey

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CXXXIII

Lady Starr to Her Sister-in-Law, Mrs. Daubeney, in India

Dear Hilda,—I have been making a collection of odd advertisements in the Personal Column of the *Times* ever since the war broke out. A complete reissue of the most striking ones at the end of the war would throw a curious light on England under the struggle, and not always too admirable either, for the beggars have come out far too strong. So also has that class of person who is too much concerned with the good behaviour of other people. I copy for you a few of the stranger ones in my album:—

This was very early, when some of the Nuts were supposed to be holding back:

"Englishwoman undertakes to form a Regiment of Women for the Firing Line if lawn tennis and cricketing young men will agree to act as Red Cross nurses to such a Regiment."

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Four months later the scornful were still on the warpath:

"WHY not design a 'pretty' uniform to attract the 'knuts' to the colours? Something which would harmonise with heliotrope socks, lavender gloves, spotted waistcoats, and mauve handkerchiefs would appeal irresistibly to their æsthetic sense—the only sense they possess. Khaki is so unromantic."

Here is an ingeniously worded request:

"WILL ANYBODY CONTRIBUTE £5 per week to help keep wife and family while I go to kill some Germans? Otherwise impossible. I am a crack shot and good horseman."

I like the following trio:

"A PESSIMISTIC AMERICAN, frequenter of a well-known London restaurant, is assured that his audible bets on the 'probable progress' (?) of our enemies are as distasteful to his neighbours as they are likely to be unprofitable—and dangerous —to himself."

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"American PESSIMIST would willingly lose many luncheons if he could make some of the 'war over in a month' party realise the necessity for every Englishman to prepare himself for a long hard tussle with a powerful and unscrupulous enemy."

"IF the person who addressed Pessimistic American in this column yesterday will COMMUNICATE HIMSELF to 'Optimistic American' the latter will undertake to make suitable representations with as much vigour as may be necessary or desirable to his tactless and ill-advised fellow-countrymen."

There were several of the following kind:

"QUESTIONS. How many hundred thousand dogs round London? How much do they cost? How many famished Belgians or Frenchmen would that sum help? How many comforts for our troops would it buy?"

This is one of an anti-football series:

"ENGLAND'S GREATEST NEED—a ZEPPELIN

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BOMB in the middle of a football field on a Saturday afternoon."

The next one puzzles me, for I have never heard of any ostracism of anyone. We English are far too uncertain of ourselves to take such an uncomfortable line as that. Also, we still cherish an ideal of individual freedom:

"I am a very HEALTHY-LOOKING VIGOROUS YOUNG MAN and over 6 ft. in height, in appearance an ideal soldier. Nevertheless I am prevented by reasons which would satisfy the most captious critic from joining the forces. Who will advise me how I am to avoid being ostracised by most men and all women? Hints and suggestions will be gratefully acknowledged by one who, through no fault of his own, is dejected, lonely, wretched, and virtually outlawed."

Here is the war in earnest:

"SKIN! OFFICER wishes to THANK the numerous persons whose offers of skin he appreciates. He almost regrets his inability to accept more than one."

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As you know, Vincent is on the Staff in France, and I have seen him only once since the war began. My Toby is a soldier too, and is now in France, so that I open the papers very nervously, even although I am always assured that wives and mothers have private information some days in advance of the Press.

The poor Indians, I heard, were not a great success at the front. It was too cold and wet for them. The Dome at Brighton, where we used to hear Patti (you remember?) and Edward Lloyd and Santley, is now a hospital for them. I was at Brighton for a day last week to see old Mrs. Burlingham, and several charabancs of wounded Indians in lovely blue robes and turbans, with dazzling smiling teeth, went by. A strange sight. And a little while ago I read a most impressive account of a funeral pyre on one of the South Downs where they burn their dead at dawn. That is stranger still! But everything is strange now.—Your loving HELEN

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CXXXIV

Captain Derrick to His Wife

My Dearest,—My blind officer has been in again to-day. He seemed a bit shaky, I thought, and not up to much, and all of a sudden he began to gulp, and then he broke down completely.

As I guessed he would rather be alone, I rang for the nurse and she steered him away.

Then she came back and told me about it. Of course I had thought it was unhappiness, a miserable new realisation of his awful rough luck; but it wasn't, it was the other thing. It seems that he had been waiting to hear from his girl as to whether she would still marry him, which of course he never for a moment expected, and indeed he had said good-bye to her, and this morning a letter came for him saying that she loved him more than ever and they would be married as soon as he liked—directly, for choice, and this just broke him up.

Well, she's a plucky one, God bless her!

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I have a day nurse and a night nurse and visits from several others as well. Facetiousness is the breath of life to our relationship. Little jokes about everything. "If I didn't laugh I couldn't stand it," one of them said to me yesterday. They really are marvellous creatures, for they work incessantly and never lose their temper, at least with me, and seem to be on really good terms with each other, which is rare among women when there are men about. I am always telling my day nurse, whom I adore, that she ought to have more time off, but directly she goes off I fret for her and feel a kind of resentment at her selfishness.

I am to have a week or so in a London home before I come to you. I cross on Tuesday, and will wire as to train, etc. Come to Waterloo, my sweet. TERENCE

CXXXV

LADY STARR TO RICHARD HAVEN

DEAR RICHARD,—Toby is now established in France, near Amiens, and goes up to those dreadful

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trenches very shortly. Then will my poor heart begin to beat. By a great piece of good fortune his commanding officer, Col. Thornton, is an old friend of ours, and he will, I am sure, keep an eye on the boy, and let me have word about him now and then. To be quite candid, he was an early flame of mine!—Yours, H.

P.S.—Now that the "war babies' " scare is over, there are such a lot of people whose houses, I find, were being prepared for the reception of these little strangers, wholly irrespective of public opinion. Perhaps had this been known . . .

CXXXVI

Toby Starr to Portia Grey

Dear Miss Grey,—Our present place is Amiens. We shall be moving towards the front after a week or so.

Of course I will come and see you at Ashford directly I get leave; but I am awfully shy, and you will think me no end of a rotter.

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The favour I wanted to ask is, Will you send me your photograph? I want to carry it in my breast pocket, because you have been so jolly and good to me—and after such a bad break on my part to start with too!

I wish I could write more, because there's heaps more in my head to say, but it's impossible just now.—Yours sincerely, TOBY STARR

CXXXVII

TOBY STARR TO LADY STARR

DEAREST MOTHER,—When the major, who is a very good sort, saw my patent West End "Trench *multum in parvo*" he laughed. "You'd better throw that away," he said, "it will only be a nuisance. Everything that it contains may be useful at one time or another, but the wise soldier believes that some one else should carry it. Old campaigners," he said, "carry only corkscrews and tin openers, trusting to the young ones to bring the bottles and the tins. But of course," he went on, "a grain of experience is worth a ton of

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advice, and you'll come to the corkscrew better if you reach it viâ all this Bond Street tomfoolery."

I am all right at present and can think of nothing I want except a new pipe. A Loewe, with no silver on it. Perhaps it would be a good thing to send two. So far I have only heard distant fighting, not seen it.—Your loving

TOBY

CXXXVIII

PORTIA GREY TO TOBY STARR

DEAR MR. STARR,—I am sending you a photograph—only an amateur one taken with a Brownie—but I have no other. My hair is in an awful mess, but that is the dogs' fault—they jumped all over me. I am afraid I am grinning too; but you must put up with it.

It is, I suppose, no use asking for yours, unless perhaps one of your friends has a Kodak.

I stop now because father says that all letters are censored; and though there is nothing that I want to say that I should mind the censor

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reading, yet I mind the idea of the censor reading it. Does this sound very foolish?

I wish it was not so cold and wet for you. I would send you a periscope only I feel sure that a young soldier with so many relations must have one.—Yours sincerely, PORTIA GREY

CXXXIX

VIOLET LASTWAYS TO LADY STARR

DEAR AUNT HELEN,—It was a very exciting crossing, because the boat had not been allowed to leave harbour the last two times on account of rumours of a submarine in the Channel. This means it was terribly crowded with the people who had been waiting. I had my buoyant waistcoat with me, but I was ashamed to wear it and sat on it all the way over. It sounds a very foolish thing to say, no doubt; but as a matter of fact it seemed so snobbish to wish to save one's life.

The passport arrangements are pitiless now. First you have to show them at Folkestone, and

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that takes an hour and a half because you pass through in single file. They ask you if you have any gold on you, and if so, they take it away and give you paper money instead. Also they ask you if you have any letters for anyone abroad, and if you have they make you post them. Then on the other side your passports are looked at and stamped again, and again you have to wait in single file. Two or three people were turned back at Folkestone because they had omitted to do something or other that was essential. It was terrible for them, and one poor woman burst into tears; but no one relents nowadays. Half-crowns can do nothing any longer!

The French official looked very narrowly from me to my photograph and from the photograph to me, and I don't wonder, for it is a most ghastly libel. But then that seems to be the rule with passport photographs, which are mostly taken, like mine, in a tearing hurry under a fierce artificial glare. "Mademoiselle is more beautiful than that," he said very prettily. I wanted to reply "So I should hope"; but there is no such phrase in my vocabulary.

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The war is much nearer in Paris than in London. This morning I was awakened quite early by a terrible buzzing, and rushing to the window, there was an aeroplane. It seems that aeroplane watchmen are always flying over the city.

To-morrow I begin my work at Neuilly.—Your loving VI.

CXL

MRS. CLAYTON-MILLS TO MRS. WISTON

MY DEAR JOAN,—Archibald is greatly disappointed to have been refused as a stretcher-bearer. He applied with great promptitude and candour, stating his unfortunate tendency to colds and liver-chills and the fact that he is not allowed to lift heavy weights. It would not have been fair to have done otherwise. And now a letter has come thanking him but declining his services, and the poor boy is in the deepest dejection, and has gone down to the river with his rod to think out some new sphere in which he might be useful.

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I wonder if your brother, Mr. Haven, could find something for him? He must know so many influential people. Something that would come under the head of war work and make him feel that he was doing what is called his "bit"?—
Yours, MAUDE

CXLI

TOBY STARR TO PORTIA GREY

DEAR MISS GREY,—Thank you a thousand times for the photograph. It is just what I wanted. You are quite what I was expecting, only better. I love rough hair best, and that smile (it is not a grin) is perfect.

How frightfully clever of you to guess I had a periscope. It is like thought-reading. As a matter of fact, I got several and gave all but two away; but I would rather use one sent by you than any.

I am arranging about a photograph of myself. Not an amateur one, but done at a shop in Amiens, next time I get a chance. But we are

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kept very hard at it. Your picture does not look a bit like a Portia. It is too jolly, and yet whenever I look at it I say Portia. I hope you don't mind, but it must sound like awful cheek.—Yours very gratefully and sincerely, TOBY STARR

CXLII

ARCHIBALD CLAYTON-MILLS TO RICHARD HAVEN

DEAR MR. HAVEN,—The mater is very keen on my doing something for the country in this time of stress, but I don't know how to begin. I cannot be a soldier because of my eyes, which get steadily worse; and all my other efforts have so far been failures. It would be very kind if you would think of something for me. I should prefer it to be something I could do at home, as I don't like the mater to be left all alone. Or could you get me some Government office job which would occupy, say, from 10 till 5 or even 5.30, and so enable me to get back in time to dress for dinner? You have so much influence. I wish I could offer my services free, but I am afraid that is impos-

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sible. And, after all, I am giving up my painting. —Believe me yours faithfully,

ARCHIBALD CLAYTON-MILLS

CXLIII

CAPTAIN DERRICK (NOW IN A LONDON NURSING HOME) TO HIS WIFE

MY DEAREST,—This is, as you discerned, a most admirable place and everything possible is done for me. The doctor says I may leave in ten days. He has also cheered me by the news that billiards can be played perfectly well by men with only the right arm left. One makes an artificial bridge quite easily. But farewell golf! As to fishing, I am doubtful, because what becomes of the reel? But I have no doubt that all kinds of dodginesses will occur to me in time.

My neighbour from Africa, who has a bullet in his leg which defies the surgeons, hobbled in to-day full of grievances. London, he says, is unbearable, by reason of the damned old women who want to shake hands with you even in the

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streets. "There was one in the Stores," he said, "this very afternoon. She seized me by the hand and thanked me publicly for all I have done in Flanders. The ruddy old fool!—I was wounded in the Cameroons."

No callers from the outer world to-day! Yesterday I had three and was horribly tired. It seems to me that the art of illness is to adjust the balance between resentment at not being visited and weariness from the attentions of visitors.

Kiss the littluns for me, my darling.

TERENCE

CXLIV

TOBY STARR TO LADY STARR

DEAREST MOTHER,—I snatch a few moments to send you a pencil scrawl saying I am so far all right.

I had my first taste of the real thing yesterday and it was pretty awful, and for a bit I didn't know how I was going to behave. But I pulled through and now it will be all right. I remember

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hearing some one say that the funk in war is pretty general, and that bigger cowards remain in the line than those that run away. I can believe it. It must require an awful lot of pluck of an inverted kind to scoot under the eyes of all one's men and pals. Either pluck or so much panic that one was practically up the pole with it. No amount of throwing grenades about when in training can possibly prepare anyone for his "baptism of fire." The noise is so terrific and scarifying. Lots of men, old soldiers too, cry by the bucket under it. They can't help it. Lots have had to give up and go back—not their fault, but their nerves.

I will write as often as I can, but you mustn't expect much. Consider no news good news.—
Your loving TOBY

CXLV

RICHARD HAVEN TO ARCHIBALD CLAYTON-MILLS

DEAR MR. CLAYTON-MILLS,—You mistake; I have no influence to get anyone a job of the

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easy kind you name. Hard work is the only thing now, and plenty of it. If you cannot fight, you could take the place of another young man who wanted to fight but could not get away. A clerk, for example. Or you could be a special constable. My experience is that a man can always have what he wants in England, where feelings are usually tepid, if he wants it enough; that is to say, if he really wants it.—Yours faithfully, RICHARD HAVEN

CXLVI

CAPTAIN DERRICK TO HIS WIFE

MY DEAREST,—It is now fixed that I leave on Saturday morning. Digby will bring me down and stay for a day or two. The train is the 11.18.

They are fairly strict about visitors, but a stranger got through to me to-day and gave me the dickens of a time. Directly he came in I knew that there had been a mistake, but it was too late. He was full of apologies, but he had

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heard that I was there and had been wounded at such and such a place, and could I tell him anything about his son who was in the same regiment and had been killed? Could I tell him how he died—anything to pass on to his poor mother and comfort them? Somehow, directly he said this, I had a horrible instinct as to what his name would be, because there was one of the lieutenants, a rather poisonous little bounder, who was killed under very painful circumstances, for he had been lying on his face for half an hour blubbering at the bottom of the trench when a shell fell on him and took his head clean off. Why, I cannot say, but I instantly knew that he was this man's son, and when he went on to say what his name was I felt myself to be completely in the cart.

What was I to do? What would you have done? I could say that I knew his son, but had never heard how he died; or I could say that I saw him die, and he died like a man doing his duty. The only risk about the second part of it was that some one else might be found to tell the truth. And all the time that these thoughts were flashing through my mind, there sat his poor

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stodgy little father, who had probably been so full of snobbish pride to have a son an officer at all, but was now utterly and pitifully genuine—perhaps hoping against hope for news of a decent end, for his face was all anxious eagerness and his mouth trembled a little.

Well, I banked on the bigger lie. I was cautious enough to ask first how it was that the colonel had not written, but it seems that he had, but had said very wisely that he had been able to collect no information, and merely stated that the boy would be missed. This was true enough, but not quite in the sense in which it would be taken. So then I said that he was close to me when he was killed and he was making a gallant fight of it. And his poor father's face lighted up, and he thanked me again and again and went away happier than he had been for weeks.

There, that's a long letter! It will be just heaven to be at home again.—Your loving

TERENCE

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CXLVII

PRIVATE STEPHEN PORTER TO MRS. HAVEN

DEAR MADAM,—It was very kind of you to send me such a nice parcel. It was the best parcel that any of us had had by a long way, and we have all been doing the puzzles.

I wish, dear madam, you would not call me brave. I didn't do anything brave. There wasn't time, for we were surrounded and captured before we knew where we were; but I often lay awake at night and wonder if I should have been properly brave if I had had the chance. To tell you the truth, I didn't look forward to a real fight at all.

There are about a hundred and twenty of us here and we are fed pretty well, but the time goes very slowly. Still, when I think of all my friends who were killed, I can't complain.—God bless you, dear Madam, and believe me yours truly and respectfully, STEPHEN PORTER

P.S.—I think, if I might be so bold, I should like some of those long novels. I lent the poetry book to one of my mates.

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CXLVIII

Richard Haven to Dr. Sutherland

Dear Sutherland,—Do you remember my sending you Walter Raleigh on "Might and Right"? Well, Raleigh has been at it again, and is now making for the *Times* a series of Broadsheets for the soldiers to read at the front. His pamphlet cost twopence; but such famine prices for literature are now a thing of the past, and the Broadsheets are six a penny, and jolly good they are too. Some people say they are too good; but I don't agree. Nor will you, I think. I am sending you a selection, and hope and pray they may escape the torpedo of the Huns and reach you safely.

Look particularly at Julian Grenfell's stanzas in the little collection of new war poetry, which is among these that I send you. To my mind this is the best poem that the war has yet produced, and it is already some months old, and its author was known not as a poet but as a polo-player!—Yours, R. H.

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This Is the Poem to Which Mr. Haven Refers

Into Battle

The naked earth is warm with Spring,
And with green grass and bursting trees
Leans to the sun's gaze glorying,
And quivers in the sunny breeze;

And Life is Colour and Warmth and Light,
And a striving evermore for these;
And he is dead who will not fight;
And who dies fighting has increase.

The fighting man shall from the sun
Take warmth, and life from the glowing earth;
Speed with the light-foot winds to run,
And with the trees to newer birth;
And find, when fighting shall be done,
Great rest, and fulness after dearth.

All the bright company of Heaven
Hold him in their high comradeship,
The Dog-Star and the Sisters Seven,
Orion's Belt and sworded hip.

The woodland trees that stand together,
They stand to him each one a friend;
They gently speak in the windy weather;
They guide to valley and ridge's end.

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The kestrel hovering by day,
  And the little owls that call by night,
Bid him be swift and keen as they,
  As keen of ear, as swift of sight.

The blackbird sings to him, "Brother, brother,
  If this be the last song you shall sing,
Sing well, for you may not sing another;
  Brother, sing!"

In dreary, doubtful, waiting hours,
  Before the brazen frenzy starts,
The horses show him nobler powers;
  O patient eyes, courageous hearts!

And when the burning moment breaks,
  And all things else are out of mind,
And only Joy-of-Battle takes
  Him by the throat, and makes him blind,

Through joy and blindness he shall know,
  Not caring much to know, that still
Nor lead nor steel shall reach him, so
  That it be not the Destined Will.

The thundering line of battle stands,
  And in the air Death moans and sings;
But Day shall clasp him with strong hands,
  And Night shall fold him in soft wings.

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CXLIX

Mrs. Haven to Lady Starr

Dear Helen,—What dreadful news about the *Lusitania!* Things seem to get worse and worse, and the world to grow more wicked. I used always to think of the Germans as such a mild, gentle people with large spectacles, who combed their hair as they left the table. Who would ever have thought of them doing these dreadful things? And then there was the dear Prince Consort, whom and quite rightly we always called "Albert the Good." What can we have done for all this to be happening? I wish I knew if we are being punished for doing wrong, or if it is just German wickedness. But anyway, as I tell Anne, it is quite time to die; and yet I should like to live long enough to see Peace declared and every one turn over a new leaf.—Your loving

Mother

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CL

Richard Haven to Lady Starr

Dear Helen,—And now they have sunk the *Lusitania*. What terrible power war puts into the hands of one man! And this is 1915 Anno Domini, as we say.

Which is it, Heine or Voltaire?—I don't remember, but it sounds like one of them—who imagined God, after the Creation, rattling the stars and planets in His pockets, as a schoolboy his marbles. One of the pockets had a hole in it, and, before God knew, a planet slipped out and was lost. It was ours.

Christianity having failed so dismally (or would half the world be at each other's throats like this?) is it not time to try something else? Some religion of humanity—since religion is necessary—that shall put the human family first and have as its chief ideal the improvement of the world we have to live in and get our daily bread in?

These are great questions.—Yours, R. H.

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CLI

Mrs. Clayton-Mills to Mrs. Wiston

Poor Archibald is in despair at a letter which he has received from Mr. Haven, who, we made sure, would help him. Mr. Haven actually has so little imagination as to suggest that the boy should become a clerk. How could Archibald do that? It is ridiculous to suppose that an artist so full of delicate sensibility and creative fancy as he is could become a clerk. A private secretary possibly, but not a clerk. One must be sensible in these matters. For the moment we are at a standstill in the matter, and Archibald has gone for the week-end to his friends the Steinheimers, who, in spite of their unfortunate name and birth, are absolutely pro-English and have the most beautiful place on Sydenham Hill overlooking London.—Yours, Maude

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CLII

Richard Haven to Lady Starr

My dear Helen,—A good story has lately found its way into the papers. A soldier was carpeted somewhere back of the front for wilfully damaging the property of the French Government. It seems that the notices in the railway carriage against leaning out of the window had caught his eye and he had carefully eliminated the German one, "Nicht hinauslehnen"! Asked to explain his conduct, he said that he had acted from motives of the purest patriotism. 'Patriotism?' exclaimed the President of the Court. "Certainly, sir," replied the soldier; "I thought that if a German wanted to lean out of the window and have his blooming napper knocked off, it would be a pity to stop him." Result, a triumphant acquittal.

We went to a theatre last night. It is really wonderful how the stage keeps up its spirits and detachment. But mummers truly are a race apart. I always hold that, so long as they are

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thorough—that is to say, so long as the theatre is their life and not merely an incident in it—actors are the happiest of creatures. But the actor who is also a citizen can be a profoundly melancholy fellow. If conscription comes in, as it probably will, we shall see the end of these capering male choruses, which to me have always been a blot on the stage. Not that young men are *au fond* any more sensible than young women, but there is something else for young men to do than sing and dance and paint their faces; and when a war is on and soldiers are needed the spectacle is ghastly. Personally I shall go to no more plays where male choruses are engaged. I wish I had lodged a protest from my seat and left last night, but I had not the pluck. Probably many of the audience thought as I do, but they too had not the pluck. Without courage nothing can ever be done.

Besides, for far too long now the stage and its lions and lionesses have been sacred. Actors and actresses have become the salt of the earth, so far as London is concerned, and they can do no wrong,

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and anyone suggesting that they can would be thrown out of the theatre. This domination of the sock and buskin has come about stealthily but very surely. If you doubt it, try to imagine what certain illustrated papers, daily as well as weekly, which do not pretend to any particular theatrical interest, would be like were London's houses of entertainment all closed.

What a chance there has been for some big firm to let its patriotism take the form of announcing that no increase would be made in the price of anything during the war—as, I believe, Felix Potin in Paris did in 1870. Nor would its virtue be its own reward. As an advertisement alone—putting the action on purely commercial grounds—the cost would probably be less (and the results greater) than a leading article in the evening papers every night of the year.—Yours,

R.

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CLIII

Miss Ellen Frisby to Private Arthur Coleman

Dear Mr. Coleman,—Your letter has just arrived and I hasten to answer it, although I cannot help feeling that you want to know rather much.

But when one is a prisoner I can believe that inquisitiveness comes natural and one must not be hard on you for it.

What I should do if I were in prison I cannot imagine.

I am five feet six and a half inches in height. My hair is auburn, my eyes are blue. I am twenty-six next March. If I am to get this off to-night I must now close.—Your sincere well-wisher, Ellen Frisby

CLIV

Toby Starr to Lady Starr

Dear Mother,—I wish you would send me a decent French phrase-book.

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I find that my French is no good at all, and the phrase-book I have does not have the right kind of things in it. Some one should compile a suitable one. These are the kind of things you want to say:

Can I get an egg for love or money?

Is there any chance of a lift to ——?

I don't care where I sleep so long as the place isn't damp. Can you swear it's not damp?

But the books give no help. They have no *emphasis* in them.

My long suit is the opening phrase, *Ess keely ar*. I always begin that way. After this war we shall be so satisfied that we are going to have peace evermore, and particularly with France, that probably no more pains than now will be taken to teach or learn French properly; but of course the neglect of modern languages is a sin. We had French lessons often enough, but what mortal use is one of them to me when the whole business of French is not being able to speak it but hear it. I can ask most questions, but unless the answer is written I haven't a notion what it means; and lots of the people can't write. This

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reminds me, anyway, that I wish you'd send me some tiny pads and pencils, so that when they can write, I can get them to stick it down. Another of my trump cards is *Parlay ploo lontmong*, but they won't do it—at least for not more than a few seconds.

I always used to hear that sailors can go anywhere and get anything they want on the word *Savvy*. They must be cleverer than soldiers, or want less.

So far I have kept very fit.—Best love.

TOBY

CLV

RICHARD HAVEN TO BARCLAY VAUGHAN

DEAR B.,—It is funny to see how economy has already taken different people. The richest man I know has given up Havana cigars, and smokes—at his own cost, that is—only arid things at threepence each with comic names. Beyond that he has not, that I am aware of, made any change. He still, for example, travels first class; which I have

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almost never done, in England, in my life. Another man that I know has given up meat for lunch; but I could not get through the afternoon if I did that. Another has given up Turkish Baths. Another has retired from one of his clubs; another is beginning to go regularly to his club for the first time, in order to see all the sixpenny weeklies, which until latterly he bought. One lady that I know has relinquished her early morning tea; another buys no more flowers for the house. Several of my friends spend their evenings at home instead of going to restaurants or the play, or to both.

But not all will stick to these changes, and most of us, I fancy, will indulge in occasional orgies whenever we feel ourselves entitled to them by our intervening Spartanism. Thus will life become much more amusing, for what was once so regular as to have become insipid will by its rarity now take on importance and a new flavour.

Economy is all very well; but it will have its defects too. It already has. The no-treating order was a godsend to the naturally miserly and grudging; and many people are about so to lose

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the habit of putting their hands in their pockets that when things are better they will not renew it. That, of course, is a danger; and the treasurers of hospitals and other public charities are probably only too well aware of it. And I can see also signs of a new snobbishness, which makes a cult of cheese-paring, taking the place of the old one which flaunted wastefulness or want of care. There must be spots on the sun. But even with such drawbacks we shall have gained as a nation by having the real worth of money—twelve pennies to the shilling, twenty shillings to the pound—brought home to us. But, as a matter of fact, at the present moment there cannot be more than nine pennies to the bob, or fifteen bob to the pound, everything has risen so.

To economists-against-the-grain who find the new conditions almost too distasteful I have two pieces of comfort. The first is an experience of my own the other day, when I gazed upon the drawn and haggard features of a millionaire, who is not only of world-wide fame but whose name is to some extent synonymous with geniality, and incidentally hit upon as good a case of the un-

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expected word as I can remember. The great man was seated forlornly and alone in a corner of a first-class compartment waiting for his little branch-line train to start, and I was moved to mention his sickly and melancholy appearance to the guard, as an illustration, if not a proof, that vast riches do not necessarily imply vast happiness. The guard agreed, and then added reflectively: "It's a pity he's not more roguish." Never did an epithet give me more surprise, and to make sure, for I half expected "robust" was intended, I lured the guard to repeat it. But there was no doubt; roguish was the word; the guard thought it a pity that the great man was not more roguish. Roguish he certainly was not, and if such dejection comes from great possessions then let us not hesitate to unload ours.

For the other piece of consolation, let me, as a comforter, quote the words of a philosopher in that most amusing, but very little-known, book, *The Wallet of Kai Lung*, of which, as you know, I am a champion. "The road to success," says he, "lies through the cheap and exceedingly uninviting eating-houses." That is our route. The

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Kaiser points the way. But success, remember, is to be the goal.—Yours, R. H.

CLVI

George Wiston to Sir Vincent Starr

Dear Vincent,—Any authentic news that you can let me have from time to time would be welcome. Meanwhile I think you ought to know that a man I know who has been talking with an intimate friend of his, an American, just returned from Germany, where he went on business, says that we are being completely hoodwinked, as usual, as regards the position of affairs there. So far from being short of food, they have supplies of everything for at least three years, and enormous reserves of gold stored away in various fortresses which have not yet been tapped at all. They are building submarines at the rate of three a week; flying machines at the rate of thirty a week; and Zeppelins at the rate of two a month. Their supply of ammunition has hardly been appreciably touched, and the young men in training

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who will be ready in a short time can be counted literally by the million. He says that the Amsterdam *Telegraaf* is really in the German pay, and is putting out its reports as to German depression merely to weaken our attack and make us careless. He also hinted that even Raemakers, the cartoonist, who has been fêted in London and Paris as a pro-Ally, is really a German agent, and in every one of his pictures, if one knew where to look for it, is a cipher message to dangerous sympathisers in England and France. I cannot tell you how disquieting it is to hear these things. You will understand, then, how much I should value anything that you can tell me touching on the efficiency and *esprit de corps*, if they exist, of our army in France. Here one hears sad stories about it.

Sometimes I think I will give up London altogether; but that of course would be cowardly. One must not fly from the truth.

Wishing you all good luck.—Yours cordially,

GEORGE WISTON

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CLVII

JERRY HARDING TO NANCY BERNAL

[*Telegram*]

CROSSING Monday night. Five days' leave.
HARDING

CLVIII

MRS. BERNAL TO MRS. HAVEN

DEAR MOTHER,—It looks as if Digby and I are to be entirely alone. Nancy now is insisting on marrying that young Harding; I had no idea that anything was going on, so blind can parents be; but it seems that they were engaged actually before Dick and Olive! And she has won over her father to sanction a sudden wedding by licence. Mothers are no longer considered at all. It's most extraordinary—all of a sudden the world seems to have been made for second lieutenants! There is nothing I haven't done for the child, and her father has spoiled her all her life,

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but everything is forgotten directly she wants to marry. They are neither of them twenty-one yet, but because it's war-time they must be allowed to rush into marriage!

Digby says we must not stand in the young people's way, but personally I don't see why the Kaiser should be allowed to upset all the common prudences of life. I need hardly say that Richard has been conspiring against me too.

Luckily I am up to my eyes in a new scheme for a hospital for worn-out nurses, and day and night am slaving to get my share of the necessary money for it. Do send me a trifle, no matter how small, and get Anne to collect something too. I enclose a card for her.—Your loving

MARGARET

CLIX

[FROM THE MARRIAGE COLUMN]

HARDING—BERNAL.—On the 21st, by special licence, Algernon Rivers Harding, only son of Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Harding of Eastly Place,

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Winchester, to Anne, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Digby Bernal of Campden Hill.

CLX

Digby Bernal to Dick Bernal

My dear Boy,—The registration—for it wasn't a wedding—went off all right, and Harding is now back at work again.

I am glad all goes well with you so far. Things here are not superficially bright, but I have perfect confidence that underneath we are progressing. Your poor father-in-law is still grousing. If all that he hears and repeats were true, the country would be morally and physically bankrupt, beaten and disgraced. And yet things seem to go on much as before, except that many people are braver and more serious, and therefore better. But men like Uncle George never examine things for themselves; they merely listen and believe, and elaborate and grizzle.

Your Olive came to see us yesterday. She looks very well, considering, and is throwing

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herself into various quiet stay-at-home war tasks that keep her mind occupied. I am, and have always been, very fond of her, but your most serious rival will of course always be your Uncle Richard! It makes me feel very old to be so near a grandfather's estate. I wish you could get away for a week or so to be with her.—Good luck, old son, D. B.

CLXI

Toby Starr to Portia Grey

My dear Miss Grey,—Another of my cousins has been married now, a mere girl named Nancy Bernal. She has married my pal Jerry Harding, the one who went in with me over that rotten advertisement, which, however, had such glorious results. I often wonder what kind of answers he got, but I have never asked him. Jerry and Nancy have been engaged on the quiet for a long time. I wonder what you think of secret engagements. I expect they're rather fun for the engaged parties, but there must be something nice

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too in having all the world know that this girl is yours. Jerry didn't want to marry till the war was over for fear he'd be hit or even killed outright. He thought that that wouldn't be fair to Nancy; but she wasn't taking any of that, and married him by special licence out of hand, and their honeymoon is something under a week. Some hustle, isn't it?

The Boches are keeping us pretty busy, but I have got over paying much attention to them. One learns to distinguish between the shells that are coming your way and those meant for others. I don't mean that we get careless exactly, but since it is all such an absolute toss up we don't let it weigh on our minds.

I saw a ripping fight in the air yesterday in which our man at last brought the Hun down. He had a bullet through his arm and threw up the sponge. The odd thing is, that I had met him before. He came to Oxford to play footer two winters ago. I should say he's as decent a chap as a Hun can be.

Half an hour afterwards I had the melancholy experience of seeing our cook's errand man blown

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to pieces. It's a kind of understood thing that during the dinner hour the gunners on both sides cry off. We keep this bargain absolutely; but the Boches usually send three shells over just to remind us that they're not gentlemen. Well, there's about forty yards of open between the kitchen and our table, and the poor devil was bringing the soup when one of these shells came along. If he'd just lain down for a bit and waited he'd have been all right, but he had a panic and started to run, and ran bang into shell number two, which absolutely scattered him. As it is a rule for every one to have a Christian burial they had to collect as much of him as they could for the purpose.

If you think that this caused us to go without our dinner you have a very wrong notion of the British soldier. We are so surprised to be still alive, any of us, that we don't let things like this spoil our appetite.

Nice reading for your quiet Ashford garden, I don't think; but you asked me to tell you even the dreadful things, and I am obeying, as a soldier must.—Yours sincerely, TOBY STARR

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CLXII

Dr. Sutherland to Richard Haven

My dear Haven,—The situation here is really comic rather than serious. Because it has revealed the fact, which every one wanted to keep secret, that there is no American nation. Yet. There will be, no doubt. America is something of all; whereas a nation is all of something. The finer, more chivalrous spirits want to fight—or at any rate want to establish their belief in honesty and decency and personal honour in some emphatic way. The chief organ of these proud, scornful knights is *Life*, which perhaps you don't see. Since the war it has been admirable, and since the sinking of the *Lusitania* its satire has literally scalded. The Allies and the cause of liberty and justice and humanity never had a better champion. Of course any satirical paper that is against Germany has a great chance now, because there is such a wonderful target in the Kaiser, who, inversely, may almost be said to edit it. At any rate he

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supplies an inexhaustible *motif;* which all such papers are the better for.

After the somewhat impetuous champions of the higher policy, on whose side is Roosevelt, by the way (although Roosevelt does not stand for what he did, and there is always the possibility that his Pro-Ally fervour and pugnacity might be at bottom Anti-Wilsonism), there are the statesmen who see very clearly the difficulties in the way, one being the internal embroilment that would instantly break forth, and another the fact that there is no battleground for either her army or navy if America did declare war. Where could she send her troops? And what is there for her ships to tackle? Furthermore, the Allies want Uncle Sam's assistance as a munition worker to go on and on, and they would then lose it. Without our war work at Bethlehem where would you all be?

Apropos of American industry for the war, a letter from a friend in France the other day told me that thousands of the *camions* employed in conveying both French soldiers and shells to the front are made here, largely by White; while in

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one place he found a cohort of American motor-lorries with the name of Krupp on every one, these having been made by us for Germany, but, delivery being impossible, re-sold to France!

It seems to me that, apart from such industry, there is nothing for Americans to do but to wait and see—in the excellent words of your Premier.

—Yours, T. S.

CLXIII

Violet Lastways to Lady Starr

Dear Aunt Helen,—The work at this hospital is very interesting, but I wish there were more English soldiers here. There are only a few, and none in my ward, where every one is French. I find that I can understand nearly all they say and I make myself understood; but it is very pleasant now and then to steal away to the ward where the English boys are, and talk properly.

One of them—his name is James Duncombe—comes from your part of the country and knows

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you by sight. He was in the racing stable. He has been shot through the lungs and speaks with great difficulty. Two others have lost eyes. The fourth had all his fingers on one hand cut off by a German officer—slashed with a sword. What is to become of them when they are discharged? That is what I am always wondering.

There is also an English officer in a room to himself, rather sidey. Every one is laughing over the blunder he made yesterday, for he rather fancies his French. He called out to the orderly who was passing, "Envoyez moi la nourrice, s'il vous plâit; j'ai faim."

I thought I would be very clever yesterday, and I went into Paris and bought a little pile of detective stories for my ward. Wouldn't you have said that all men would like detective stories? But it was a failure. It seems that there is only one kind of story that they like, and that is about the Wild West. There is a series now running in France which you buy for a few centimes, with a wonderful hero named Nick Carter, and this is what the French soldiers want. Arsène Lupin

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isn't in it with Nick Carter. And the most welcome present you can give them is sweets.

They're really just children all the time—children with appalling vocabularies.

I will write again soon.—Your loving infirmière, VI.

CLXIV

NANCY HARDING TO HER HUSBAND

MY DARLING JERRY,—I think about you day and night. Do take care of yourself and do not run unnecessary risks. I know how brave and impulsive you are. It was all very well before, but now you have some one else to live for.

It is very odd being married and not having any husband or any home. But we shall have tremendous fun getting the furniture and things after the war, won't we? I am busy making lists of what we shall want. Mother, who has quite come round, is helping me.

I look in all the furniture shops and get all their lists. There are some firms which do it all

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for you for so much, but that is very dull, I think.

Bimbo was very funny about the anti-aircraft guns in the Park the other day. "Aren't they afraid they'll hit God?" he asked. What heavenly things small children can be!—Your ever loving NAN.

CLXV

MRS. PARK-STANMER TO LADY STARR

DEAR HELEN,—I had such an adventure yesterday. One of my lonely subs of a year ago came to call on me. He is stationed at Shorncliffe and he walked over. Such a dear boy. He says that my letters were the greatest comfort to him. I always try to picture them as I write to them, but I got this one absolutely wrong. He is really very tall and thin, with a big nose and yellowish hair, and I had thought of him as thick-set and dark; but most awfully attractive, and ready, like all my boys, to be up in arms over me. I told him I was called the Mother of the Mess, and he was furious. "Mother, indeed!" he said.

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"Sister of the Mess, perhaps, but not mother." It was such fun watching him. I expect I shall see a lot of him—unless, of course, he is twitched over to France, which is always a possibility, worse luck! for every one except Horace. He, I always tell him, will be the last man left in England.—Yours, AMABEL

CLXVI

LADY STARR TO RICHARD HAVEN

DEAR RICHARD,—I had a great thrill yesterday. I had been for a few days' visit to the Barringtons in the Isle of Wight, and was coming back in the steamer when we came upon a gigantic vessel moored in the middle of the Solent, with its head towards the East, waiting for an escort or something. And what do you think it was? The *Mauretania*, all painted slate colour, and on every inch of its decks were men in khaki with sun helmets, on their way to the Dardanelles. You know that annoying tearful feeling you get when a monarch goes by in state.

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Well, I had it yesterday, only it did not annoy me in the least. I just had to cry. There they were, these myriad men, all waving good-bye, and every one on our little boat was waving back, and one knew that it was good-bye for ever for so many of them. No more England, no more home, nothing but a bullet and a foreign grave. Men marching to the station do not seem half so doomed as men on a troopship.

I am glad I did not have to say good-bye to Toby in this way. I never could have stood it.
—Yours, H.

CLXVII

Richard Haven to Barclay Vaughan

Dear B.,—It is a commonplace to say that England can never be the same; but it has not been easy hitherto to put one's finger here and there and show where the difference will be. Now, however, when girls are taking almost every male situation, and have become nurses by the thousand, one can see clearly enough that almost

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the principal difference will be an England of enfranchised woman. I don't mean enfranchised in the political sense merely, but in the larger sense. An independence will have come to her that she has wofully lacked,—ranging her on the administrative side with French women, and self-reliantly with the American,—and the Turks among us won't like it, but will have to put up with it. Already their strongholds, the clubs, have fallen, for waitresses are now to be found in most of them; and now for the first time having spies there, the Turks' wives are probably learning what exceedingly dull dormitories those places are.

Some folks' incorrigible disregard of the situation is appalling. When one sees how little difference there is in their mode of life among playgoers and diners out and, above all, racegoers, one has to admit sadly that there are in this odd little England of ours people who didn't deserve to have the war at all.

I find Burke remarking in conversation: "France has all things within herself; and she possesses the power of recovering from the sever-

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est blows." Dear France, I hope it is still true.—
Yours, R.

CLXVIII

George Wiston to Richard Haven

My dear Richard,—The interesting event came off this morning and I am the grandfather of a fine boy. Olive is doing well. But what I really want to tell you is that there are dark and, I fear, only too well-founded whispers of the appalling vulnerability of our coast defences should the Huns attempt an invasion. Everything is chaos since the coast-guards were disbanded—by the folly of some sapient Jack-in-office drawing his £5000 a year to betray his country. The thought of it all is maddening, and what life is going to be like when the war is (if ever) over I dare not think. Averse as I am constitutionally and resolutely from losing hope, I am beginning to believe that there is some truth in the old saying, "Call no man happy till he is dead."—Yours cordially, George Wiston

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P.S.—We go from bad to worse. I have it on the best authority, but naturally am not at liberty to give any name, that we have lost two dreadnoughts and three destroyers in the past week, but the Government dare not make it public. I am making one more grave appeal to the Government to be brave and tell the truth. Look for it in to-morrow's papers over the signature "Magna est Veritas."

CLXIX

[From a Daily Paper]

Births

Bernal.—On the 6th inst., at 108 Lancaster Gate, the wife of Lieutenant Richard Bernal of a son.

CLXX

Nancy Harding to Her Husband

My darling Jerry,—I was so glad to have your letter and to find that you are still all right.

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Do get some leave soon. London always seems full of officers on leave, so I can't think why you don't have it too. When I was passing by Cox's yesterday afternoon I saw three or four of them all over French mud, who had come straight from their train at Charing Cross to rush in for some money; and any one of them might just as well have been you.

I keep as busy as I can, and on Wednesday I nearly dropped through selling programmes at a Red Cross *matinée*, but I find myself wanting you all the time. And it is tiresome to have the servants continuing to call me Miss.

Do you know I can't help almost wishing that you would get some tiny little wound, only just the teeniest weeniest, of course—so that you could be invalided home and then stay here.

Olive's baby is a pet.—Your very lonely wife,

NAN.

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CLXXI

Richard Haven to Lady Starr

My dear Helen,—Having found nor heard no new war story for you, I am tempted to try and tell you one myself. True too.

I went on Saturday to Eastbourne to spend the day with the Tristrams—you know who I mean—Captain Tristram of Welwyn who was at school with me—poor old Tristram having had an accident and convalescing there, and this is what happened, word for word.

I went straight from the station to the promenade, feeling certain that Mr. and Mrs. Captain would be there. But they weren't. So then I found the house and there was the Captain, on his crutches, plodding round and round the tiny back garden.

"And that's all he'll do," little Mrs. Captain complained. "Here we are in an expensive house, at an expensive watering-place, for no other purpose than that he may get the sea air and be

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amused by the people, and he won't leave this poky back garden."

"But, my dear old idiot," said the Captain, "you know the reason why well enough. You know I can't go out."

"I know you're a ridiculous super-sensitive egotistical person," she retorted, "and you ought to live on a planet of your own."

"Do tell me," I said.

"Well——" she began.

"No," said the Captain, "let me. She'll put me in a false light, this hateful woman."

After a brief skirmish little Mrs. Captain gave way.

"To begin with," said Tristram, "you will admit that my position is about as foolish as any man's can be. To be in the trenches for four months without a scratch, and then, the day after reaching home on leave, to break one's leg fooling about with a pack of children—you'll agree that absurdity couldn't go much farther than that. Undignified, too. Well, as soon as I could get about we came down here, and on the first day I took my crutches and hobbled down to the

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parade. That's what we'd come for, and I never had a second thought about it. But this place, as perhaps you have noticed, is full of wounded men—really wounded men, decently injured by bullets and shrapnel and the other honourable apparatus of war—and before I realised the situation, there I was all among them—I, the only fraud there."

"Fraud!" I interjected. "What rubbish you talk! After four months in the trenches, too."

"That's nothing," he said. "The trenches are not the point. The point is that I was on crutches from a leg broken in the silliest possible way at home, and these fellows were on crutches with legs properly crocked up at the front. I tell you the realisation gave me a shock. Talk about wolves in sheep's clothing: I was the very limit. I was quickly made to feel it, for before I could get out of it up comes an old lady to insist on the privilege of shaking the hand of one who had so suffered for his country; and then a blazing old lunatic took his hat off right at me and said it was an honour to salute one of England's heroes."

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"So you are," said little Mrs. Captain stoutly.

"Oh, do stop talking balderdash!" said her husband. "I put it to you," he added to me, "what could any ordinary decent man do but get back here, away from the genuine lot of wounded as soon as possible, and lie low?"

"Isn't he absurd—isn't he too ridiculous?" little Mrs. Captain exclaimed. "Fancy carrying a conscience like that about in a world like this!"

"I need hardly say," the Captain continued, "that I came in for some pointed domestic criticism, and under its influence—and it's fairly potent, you know," he remarked in parenthesis, throwing his wife a kiss—"under its influence I consented to go out again, but only on condition that I might put myself right with the public."

"Do listen to this," said Mrs. Captain—"the dear old snob!"

"Not at all," said her husband. "It isn't snobbish to wish not to deceive. Anyway, snobbish or not—and we shall never agree about this—I had to be straight with myself, so I prepared a placard to the effect that my broken leg had nothing to

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do with the war, and hung it on one of my crutches where every one could read; and would you believe it," he went on bitterly, "within a few minutes I was bombarded by a new set of old gentlemen and old ladies who wished to shake the hand of so candid a man. 'Such a brave teller of the truth,' they said. So there you are. And now you understand why I prefer our back garden to all the waves of the English Channel. Here, at any rate, I am not a fraud, nor am I offered compliments on being merely commonly honest."

"Did you ever hear of such nonsense?" little Mrs. Captain inquired, as she slipped her arm into his. "Bless his absurd old heart!"—Yours,

R.

CLXXII

Toby Starr to Portia Grey

My dear Miss Grey,—You remember that officer cousin of mine who was married last year to another of my cousins? Well, they've got a kid.

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That makes the war seem to have been going on for a bit, doesn't it? It's a boy. People used to say that kids born in war-time were usually boys. I wonder how that is working out. Personally I would rather have a girl, I think—at any rate for the first. I have always been sorry I had no brother or sister, and you are like that too, aren't you? And we've both been rather alike in taking refuge in dogs.

Do you think friends should be alike or different? Some people say one and some the other. I think it is jollier to be alike and agree about things. I know I'm always nervous when I go to see those sort of married people who take a pride in having different tastes. I'm always afraid there's a row coming.—Yours sincerely, TOBY STARR

CLXXIII

JERRY HARDING TO HIS WIFE

MY DEAREST NAN,—Please be a good brave girl and never write to me again about being

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wounded. Suppose the Censor had opened that letter (which by great good luck he didn't do), what a rotten thing for him to read.

There's only one thing to do in this beastly war, my sweet, and that is to keep one's end up and grin. We must never give way, any of us, and you at home must feel just as much on active service as we are out here. I don't want to be wounded for many reasons. Chiefly for your and our sakes, but also, very considerably, because I want to go on fighting these brutes till we lick them. To be wounded would be to be out of it, and that is unthinkable.

So be brave and trust in our lucky star.—
Your loving J.

CLXXIV

Richard Haven to Mrs. Lastways

Dear Joan,—I met little Harry Lancaster yesterday, hearty as ever and as ever running over with invitations and those generous impulses which come to him in such profusion that they

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make an ordinarily quite hospitable man appear grudging. He had just left his brother, who is home for a few days from the front. Although fifty-five, he got in the Army, somehow, and Harry was allowed by his commanding officer to present him with a revolver, although sergeants are not supposed to carry these. And what do you think the result has been? He has already killed with it, beyond any doubt, Harry assured me, his eyes dancing with pride, "two Germans for each member of the family"—and the family is not a small one either.

"Splendid!" I said.

What bloodthirsty ruffians we become!

Poor old George—or Jonah, as I hear he is called at his club—not even the birth of a new potential soldier adds to his confidence in his country. It is funny how many Englishmen seem to want to belong to an incompetent race—are not happy unless they can convince you that all their goods are rotten. I wonder if it was always the same or if it is a new development. History does not tell us. The special pity of it

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is that this kind of temperament too often takes to journalism.

After one has reached a certain age there is a great danger that any sudden changes of one's habits in the direction of economy may be very costly. My recent efforts to be economical have been so disastrous that I think of dropping them altogether, and merely being careful. To begin with, I knocked off taxis, with the result that I got a vile cold, in a bus, as I now remember I always used to do. That cold cost me several pounds, for it kept me at home for a day or so and depreciated my abilities for a week. I also completely upset my digestion by food reforms, all also in the national interest. So now I talk no more of being economical. I am too old and also too impatient; and economy and impatience have never joined hands. But after office hours and apart from meals I think I can save a little.

—Yours, R.

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CLXXV

Mrs. Richard Bernal to Her Husband

My darling Dick,—You really must get leave soon, if only to see him. He is really too sweet and just like you. I am getting stronger every day and shall soon be about again. I have been a model patient, the Doctor says, but that is easy with this little mite in one's arms. He would send you a kiss if he could, I know.—Your

Olive

CLXXVI

Private Arthur Coleman to Miss Ellen Frisby

Dear Miss Ellen,—I received your welcome letter last night and it has given me the highest pleasure, although it might have been longer. I cannot conceal my gratification that your hair is red. It is my favourite colour for a lady. And blue eyes go so beautifully with it. I can now

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see you, I think, when I close my eyes and think very hard. Won't you add to your other kindness and send me one of your photos? I am sure you have one to spare, but if not you can easily have one taken at Aylesbury.

I wish you had answered what I asked about walking out. It would make so much difference to me to know about that, not because I should bother you, but because a man has a separate kind of thought for a young lady who is fancy free and a young lady who is not. I should like to know too if there are any footmen, or butlers, or gardeners, or grooms at your place. They are not men that I much take to. You might like to know, though you don't ask, that I am twenty-seven come July and a joiner by trade. My home is at Birmingham and I was doing well before the war, and my place is to be kept open for me. I live in lodgings at Sparkbrook. I am just six feet in heighth and have brown hair.—Yours respectfully and sincerely,

ARTHUR COLEMAN

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CLXXVII

Lady Starr to Mrs. Lastways

Dear Joan,—A perfectly dreadful thing has happened here. I don't know whether you remember Mrs. Wink, the little woman who used to help in the kitchen now and then? With very prominent eyes. Well, early in the war the news came that her husband, who was a reservist, was killed, and after a year she married again. You see what is coming—"Enoch Arden" once again. Yesterday who should walk in but Wink himself, with only one arm and very much bedraggled, but alive. It seems that he was left for dead, but for months was kept at a farm by some kindly French people.

Mrs. Wink, who is now Mrs. Blencowe, began very properly by fainting. She then hurried here for advice. It seems that she infinitely prefers Blencowe, her new husband, who is the postman, both for himself and his position; at the same time, she has a horror of the sin of bigamy and views herself with a certain disgust. The situation

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is complicated, as usual, by various human inconsistencies. Wink's one idea being to regain his home, he is prepared to overlook the offence, whereas his wife, it is very obvious, although she never puts the feeling into words, would much prefer that he should cast her off. On the other hand, Blencowe, who is rumoured already to have somewhat tired of his marriage, takes the line that Wink is a much wronged man, and that the only reparation due to him—namely, the surrender of Mrs. Blencowe—should be made.

The two men probably may be dismissed from the plot as any but tragic figures, for neither thinks of much beside his own comfort, although Blencowe's efforts to conceal his real preferences under a cloak of high magnanimity are beyond words joyful to watch. It is the woman who is really pathetic, torn as she is between shame, self-respect, a certain sense of loyalty to Wink (who, however, of course behaved very badly in not writing), and a genuine passion for Blencowe. And of course there is everything in Blencowe's favour; for not only is he younger than Wink,

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and fit, but he is a man of some importance in the place, and can tell his wife what he reads on our post cards.

As the case stands at present, all three, by the advice of the rector, are isolated. Blencowe lives alone in his cottage; Wink lodges with a neighbour; and Mrs. Blencowe has rejoined her mother. A new Solomon seems to be the real need of the village, which meanwhile was never half so happy. Old feuds have been patched up in order not to hinder the flow of gossip and conjecture.

Well, we shall see what happens.—Your

HELEN

CLXXVIII

GEORGE WISTON TO TOBY STARR

DEAR TOBY,—I have had a letter from that complacent creature, your uncle Bernal, saying that we must win, because Time must be on our side. But for the sake of argument, granting him that point, where and what shall we be then? There won't be a penny left in the country. As

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it is, we are spending five millions a day. Where is it coming from? Win or lose, we are done.

Why, however, I am writing to you is to say that I hope you are keeping fit in France, and to ask you to let me know anything interesting that you hear over there. I put to your father the same reasonable request, but either he did not get my letter or cannot find time to answer it.—Yours cordially, GEORGE WISTON

CLXXIX

TOBY STARR TO PORTIA GREY

MY DEAR MISS GREY,—I don't write to you half as much as I want to, although perhaps oftener than you are keen on, because there is too much to do. You can't have any notion of what a rush it is over here, and how impossible to count on any future minute as your own. But I often look at your photograph and bless that advertisement of mine and old Jerry's, who is now my cousin by marriage, for luring me on to the bet. I often wonder what kind of letters he got

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in answer to his. Better than mine, I don't fink.

Tell me more about your home, won't you? Tell me what your father is painting just now, and what pictures you have in your bedroom, and who is your favourite author.

I am not much at reading myself, but I think *The Four Feathers* is ripping. I have just finished it. I like Seton Merriman too. A man here has all his books.

I wonder if you believe in fate. I mean by fate a kind of chance full of meaning, or perhaps predestination is the best word. I like to believe that everything that happens to me is predestined. Part of a scheme all arranged by the stars or whatever it is that does these things. For instance, I believe that it was all mapped out that I should put that advertisement in the paper and that you should pick me out to write to. You see it might so easily have been another advertisement—old Jerry's even—*but it wasn't.* That's the corking thing. *It was mine.*

Now I must stop, for the letters are being collected. Whatever else there is to grumble at over here, wet, and rats, and Pip-Squeaks and

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Jack Johnsons, and dirt and screwmaticks, we do get two things up to sample, and those are the post and rations.

Please write again soon.—Yours very sincerely,

TOBY STARR

CLXXX

NANCY HARDING TO HER HUSBAND

MY DARLING JERRY,—I am so ashamed of myself to write as I did and to make such a fuss about my loneliness, for I am fortunate indeed compared with some wives. Only yesterday I met Cicely Franklin in Kensington Gardens. You remember how jolly she used to be; well, she is now a widow, after being married only a month longer than us. Isn't that terrible? And poor Uncle Terence has lost his arm. So really, since you keep fit, I ought to be quite gay. I promise you I will be as brave as you can possibly wish. —Your ever-loving NAN

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CLXXXI

Lady Starr to Mrs. Lastways

Dear Joan,—Our village comedy or tragedy has suddenly taken a new turn. It is now established that Mrs. Wink is to present the world with a little Blencowe. (We never say "baby" here; we say "increase.") This alters things. Otherwise, I believe, Blencowe would have been forced, not at all against his will, to retire, and Wink would have resumed his old position as her lord and very much her master. But Wink now pauses and reflects, and not unnaturally. I find that my kitchen is divided. Cook is for Blencowe retaining the lady; the others are for Wink. The rector, of course, says that Wink is the true husband, but has to admit that he is being tried rather high, as the Americans say, by the turn that events have taken. Were it not that Wink wants to be worked for by his lawful toiler, and live comfortably ever after, he would, I am sure, disappear again; but what is a one-armed man to do?—Yours, H.

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CLXXXII

Mrs. Park-Stanmer to Lady Starr

My Dear,—It is extraordinary how the unhappy people always come to me, as though I was a kind of magnet. I think I told you about poor Gerald Vansittart. Well, he has now gone to France, not, I am glad to say, to the front, but in some safe capacity, and he writes to me as often as he can, always beginning "Madonna." Isn't that sweet?

I have also on my hands another lieutenant who sticks to me like a leech. He implored me the other day to let him call me Amabel. What is one to do when they ask things like that? I hate to be unkind and say no, and he is such a forlorn dear. You should see how he goes—quite white and tense—when Horace says one of his sharp things to me or finds fault with anything. Last night at dinner Horace swore because the soup had soot in it, only the tiniest little lumps, and I thought that Guy—that's his name—would

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have struck him. If he had, it would have meant court martial and imprisonment—isn't that awful? It makes me feel so responsible and frightened.—Yours ever, AMABEL

CLXXXIII

LADY STARR TO MRS. LASTWAYS

DEAR JOAN,—The Wink case has solved itself, but not too satisfactorily. Blencowe has vanished. This must have cost him a wrench, I know, for it is no small thing to have been a trusted postman here for over thirty years and to be a person of some importance in other ways too. Besides, he had his cottage, quite well furnished, garden, and so forth. But he has gone, leaving no address, but saying that he will never return. It is really a story for W. W. Jacobs. All interest is now centred in the future relations of the Winks, for the poor little woman moves about like one in a dream, and what surname the child is to possess! Personally it would not surprise if it was

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never born, the mother is so likely to wake up one day soon and do something desperate.

I have only good news of Toby.—Yours,

H.

CLXXXIV

Violet Lastways to Lady Starr

Dear Aunt Helen,—All goes well. I am pretty tired, but I mean to go on.

My greatest difficulty over here just now is not nursing and keeping fit, but in persuading the French people whom I meet and the wounded men that England is really in earnest. They have got it so firmly fixed in their heads that everything is going on just the same with us, and that we are only playing at war, that this is no easy job. I suppose it is largely the difference between a conscripted country and one that is not conscripted; and they lose sight altogether of our navy, and then they read about our disgusting race meetings. And the poor things, of course, are on a very different footing from us, with all that great tract of France occupied by

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the Germans, and so many ruined villages. No wonder they are a little sore at the disparity.

Here is rather a funny thing. I asked one of the English soldiers at what place he was wounded. He said that, as it happened, he had noticed the name of the village as they were entering it. It was "Ralentir"!

My poor text-book French is not much good here except to give instructions in. But the men are dears and do all they can to make it easy for me. But their phrases are so roundabout. This is a very common one: "Il va y avoir du boulot." That means there's going to be trouble. And when they see anything rather better than usual for dinner they say, "Se caler les joues." I have bought a dictionary of poilu terms, but it can't ever be quite up to date.

Tell me about Toby. I think he might write to me. I never go into the ward where the English men are without a little tremor lest he should be in one of the beds. Poor boy, I do so hope he manages not to "stop one"—which is what being hit is called here.—Your loving

VI.

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CLXXXV

Ellen Frisby to Private Arthur Coleman

Dear Mr. Coleman,—It has not been convenient to have a new photo taken, but I have written to my sister for one that was done about a year ago. My friends don't think it quite does me justice, and I do my hair differently now, but none the less I send it as you are so kind as to wish for it. I am putting it into the parcel, together with some sweets and cigarettes and a few recent numbers of *Forget-me-Not* in case you want a read.

I thought of you yesterday when three aeroplanes went over.—Your sincere friend and well-wisher, Ellen Frisby

CLXXXVI

Richard Haven to Dr. Sutherland

Dear Sutherland,—Your interesting letter escaped the submarines.

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We too have aliens in our midst, but the aliens that count with us are not the Germans and Austrians, who are mostly interned, but the intriguers and the frivolists and the bookmakers and all the horde of petty creatures who still fan the flames of the old Liberal and Tory dissensions. They are the true enemy in our midst, far more deadly than any of the interned waiters could be, or probably ever wished to be. For no man that ever willingly left his own fatherland to scamper about plying another race with food and drink and opportunities for abuse that he may not reply to, can ever be much of a foe.

One effect of the war here, which is getting very noticeable, is a relaxation of propriety. The word having gone forth (and naturally enough) that nothing is too good for the fighting man, a new tolerance has come in with regard to his amours. Girls may almost be said to be set at him. The more frivolous papers, both in picture and paragraph, deal with little else; and it seems to be a point of honour (or dishonour) both with editors, theatrical managers, and modistes to convert the schoolgirl into the woman of the world

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with breathless haste. I should like to think that we were going to adjust these things later on. The healthy years between seventeen and twenty-one are too good in a girl's life to be lost. The Personal Columns of the papers yield further proofs of the young officer's roving proprietary eye. This kind of advertisement occurs every morning:

GAIETY.—Will YOUNG LADY, black hat, last but one, fourth row, Wed. Matinee, COMMUNICATE with officer two rows behind?

There must, of course, have been a certain amount of wireless communication in the theatre to make such an advertisement possible. What one wonders is, if these people always read the same papers.

We have not yet reached the frankness of the French, and probably shall not; but some of our men seem already to have learned French candour and machinery, judging by the following which I cut from *La Vie Parisienne*:

JEUNE OFFICIER cavalerie anglaise, ayant 6 mois front, désire, pour prochaine permission

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Paris, correspondre avec jeune femme jolie, distinguée, châtaine ou blonde; discrétion d'officier. Ecrire: Captain MacBlank, Poste Restante, Montfaucon.

JEUNE DOCTEUR anglais, au front, cherch. jol. marr. Parisienne, type Fabiano, aimant beaucoup flirt.—A. B., 158e Brigade, R.F.A., B.E.F.

I think that among the most unhappy men left in London must be the head waiters who are either Swiss, or pretend successfully to be, or are over age for war. Unhappy, not because they cannot fight, but because they cannot get waiters. There is not a restaurant in London to-day which has any but second-rate and third-rate waiters—old men or weakly young men. To have engaged girls, as the clubs have done, would be wiser; but for some reason this has been avoided. But customers should be very lenient about bad service. I am aware that the war is made the scapegoat to cover a great many defects with which it has nothing to do; but for inferior service it is wholly responsible, and most of the strain and censure fall on the unfortunate head waiters. I watch

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them growing visibly older and more haggard.—
Yours, R. H.

CLXXXVII

Anne Wiston to Lady Starr

[This letter, having been excised by the Press Bureau, cannot be printed until after the war. —E. V. L.]

CLXXXVIII

Portia Grey to Toby Starr

Dear Mr. Starr,—I had never thought much about predestination, but I can quite understand that it is an attractive belief. For one thing, you can never prove that there is no such force at work. But what I can't understand is how, when the world is so full of people and other living things, any one creature can believe itself to be the object of so much attention. Doesn't that thought give you any trouble? The whole riddle of existence is all so mysterious and tremendous

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that whenever I find myself thinking of it I change the subject; and since the war it has become more perplexing still, with the Germans and ourselves equally claiming our successes to be due to God's goodness. One of us must be mistaken. I think the French, who say nothing about God, are wiser.

A very interesting man has been staying here, and we have had some long walks. The country is so beautiful just now—it seems impossible that all the fighting can be going on just over there.
—Yours sincerely, PORTIA GREY

CLXXXIX

RICHARD HAVEN TO DR. SUTHERLAND

[See note to letter CLXXXVII.]

CXC

PRIVATE ARTHUR COLEMAN TO ELLEN FRISBY

DEAR MISS ELLEN,—Your photo arrived safely, together with the peppermints and Wood-

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bines. Thank you very kindly. I like your photo and keep it handy. The hair seems very nicely done, to my way of thinking, but ladies are not so easily satisfied. I wonder what your new way of doing it is like.

It is very dull here, and more so since some silly juggins lost two of the cards out of our pack. We had an entertainment last night, in which I gave an imitation of George Robey, but it wasn't a great success, because I couldn't remember all the words of the song, and no one else knew them, but you should have seen my arched eyebrows. They were a knock out. We don't have another entertainment for a fortnight, and I think I shall imitate Harry Champion then. Do you know him? He sang "Boiled beef and carrots." One of our lot is rather a brainy chap, and he is writing a revue, and I may get a part in that. It is to be called *Hate Dirty: or, We're all Hundone.* Little Willie is to come into it. Hate dirty means 8.30, which is the time the piece begins. Do you see the joke?

I would rather have the weekly *Mirror* than *Forget-me-Not*, if you don't mind; but I like the

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name of the latter. I must close now, as dinner is nearly ready. Hoping that you are well and in good spirits.—I am, yours truly,

ARTHUR COLEMAN

CXCI

TOBY STARR TO PORTIA GREY

MY DEAR MISS GREY,—I snatch a moment or so in my dug-out to answer your last, which made me very homesick. How extraordinary lucky that friend of yours is to be able to walk about dear Old England, and with you. I feel as if I would give anything to be in a Kentish lane again and see the flowers and smell the freshly cut wood in a coppice. But I should be mouldy company for you, I fear, because I can't talk and I don't really know about anything except perhaps cricket.

There is no country here—at least not what we mean by country. It is all country really, but blasted by the shells. Next to a dead pal torn to pieces, nothing gives you such an idea of how

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rotten war is as a wood of flowers and leaves all blackened and the trees smashed and every bird scared miles away. Not every bird, though. It is wonderful how some have stuck it.

I hope I don't bore you with all this.

I keep very fit, and of course it is fearfully exciting never knowing what is going to happen any minute. It seems impossible, when you think about it, that anyone can escape being hit, but of course lots do.

We'll get to Lord's yet!—Yours sincerely,

TOBY STARR

CXCII

GEOFFREY HARDING, J.P., TO RICHARD HAVEN

DEAR MR. HAVEN,—You will probably remember me, for we met the other day when my son Jerry married your niece Miss Bernal. I write now on a very sad business: no less than to say that Jerry is dead. I have just received a War Office telegram to that effect, and I am writing to ask you to be so good as to tell his wife. It is

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quite beyond my powers, and, moreover, I have the boy's mother to comfort here. There is no real comfort possible. I can only say, "The Lord gave and the Lord taketh away," and remind her that his end was unselfish and soldierly, and his life laid down for his country and for freedom. He was a good boy, and I wish now that I had increased his allowance. If your niece would like to come up to us here a little later for a good cry I expect it would do us all good.

You must forgive me for putting this heavy task on to you, but I feel that you would be kinder than a letter, and telegrams I don't believe in.—Yours sincerely, GEOFFREY HARDING

CXCIII

RICHARD HAVEN TO MRS. HAVEN

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I am grieved to have to tell you that our poor little Nancy is a widow already. Her father-in-law had the news by telegram and asked me to break it. You will see the name in the official list in a day or so.

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I went over to Campden Hill at once and found the child alone—both Digby and Margaret were out, destination unknown, but undoubtedly both hard at work in some or other war industry. These are terrible moments; but something grave in my appearance and the unusual event of my being there at all served as a kind of herald, so that she jumped at the fact and no words were needed. I suppose that, like all the young wives to-day, she was expecting it. Poor creatures, how can they escape that dread? Well, we had a good cry—my first tears for I can't say how long, but years and years.

She will be very brave, I am sure, and there is this to help the young widows in war-time—that there are, alas! so many of them that they can supply courage to each other; at any rate, one must not be less brave than another, and being soldiers' widows, and their husbands having died fighting, they too must show gallantry. But the poor little thing is horribly bruised and broken. For the moment she has no foothold and sees no future.

Write to her. Every letter for a while will

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start her tears afresh, and that brings relief.
—Your loving RICHARD

CXCIV

NANCY HARDING TO MRS. HAVEN

MY DEAREST GRANNY,—Thank you for your darling letter. I am going to be as brave as I am sure Jerry was and as he would like me to be.

Everybody has been so kind. I had never thought there was so much kindness in the world. I am sure I have had as many as fifty letters, and it is wonderful to think of all these people, with things to do, finding the time to write, and such very sweet letters too. Three or four were from Jerry's fellow officers in France, saying such splendid things about him. It all makes me wonder more and more what he could see in me to wish to marry me. But that is just nothing but a strange dream now.

Such a sweet thing happened yesterday. Next door to us live the Woodhouses, and they have

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two children, a little boy and girl of about eight or nine. Perfect dears. Well, what do you think these little pets did, but struggle in, soon after breakfast, with their gramophone and a pile of records, because they had heard that I was unhappy and they thought that the music would cheer me up. Andrew, the boy, who has great blue eyes, very seriously recommended "Tipperary" as a cheerful tune. An avenging nurse soon followed, but they had really done me good.

I shall now get a war job which will take up every minute of the day.—Your loving

NANCY

CXCV

DIGBY BERNAL TO GEORGE WISTON

MY DEAR GEORGE,—I am sure your only interest is in England and the Allies winning the war; but I can't help feeling that you and your favourite journals make a mistake in supposing that our leaders and rulers do not equally want that end and toil honestly for it. Everything

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seems to me to be going on all right—not rapidly, but surely. To be frank, I can't understand those Englishmen, with whom you seem to me sometimes to sympathise, who are suspicious of everything that the Government and those in power do, and who look on the heads of departments as corrupt, or incapable, or both. Why is it so distasteful to suppose equally that every one is doing his best? Sometimes when I read your letters or hear you talk I wonder if you will not be really disappointed when the war is over and we have won. Forgive me for writing like this, but when one has a son fighting, and has just lost a son-in-law, one is even less prepared for continual and not particularly well-grounded attacks on the War Office and the Cabinet. I don't think you can have quite realised how much worse that kind of thing can make it for parents and those who are bereaved.—I am, yours sincerely, DIGBY

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CXCVI

George Wiston to Digby Bernal

Dear Digby,—Your letter came as a great surprise to me. You seem completely to misunderstand my attitude, and to think that I find fault for the sheer pleasure of doing so. Nothing could be farther from the fact. My case is, that there is supineness in every department of public life to-day. The Government fears to do any bold thing. For example, it does not deport or intern all the hostile aliens, most of whom are dangerous spies. Why? Because there is no one with enough imagination to see that a man once a German is always a German. Imagination is indeed the crying need of the moment. Then look at our air service. Look at our ordnance. Why have we not siege guns like the Germans? Why have we no Zeppelins? People say that the Navy is all right; but how do we know? What do we know of Jellicoe? Why was not Lord Fisher put in command?

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As you no doubt have noticed in life, it is the small things that tell. It is the straws which indicate the direction of the wind. Only yesterday I saw a letter from a man at the front who said that the very first time he put his spade to the earth, to begin a new trench, it broke. What do you say to that? That means bad work at the contractor's, and without honest contractors no army can win.

I quite appreciate your wish that everything should be all right in this best of all possible worlds; but I fear you are destined to some very ugly awakenings.—Yours cordially,

GEORGE WISTON

CXCVII

TOBY STARR TO LADY STARR

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I am most awfully cut up about Jerry. He was a jolly good sort and my best pal. Please give my love to poor Nancy. I would write to her but I don't know how to.

Now I come to think about it, Jerry didn't look

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as if he would get through; but it hadn't struck me before.

Somehow or other the bullets miss me. There is no reason why they should, but they do, and I hope they'll make a habit of it to the end. But I have had some jolly near shaves and have seen lots of good fellows laid low. Only yesterday poor Hugh Blackstone was pipped right at my side, and he lasted only ten minutes. He was able to give me a few messages, and he said one thing I shall never forget. "I hope we're all dying to some purpose," he said. "It will be awful if this war leaves off in such a state that another can begin soon afterwards."

What do you think those German blighters in the trench opposite us did the other day? This is a gospel fact, and it shows that there's been some peace talk among them. They held up a placard with these words on it: "Shoot high, boys; we shall be shaking hands in 2 or 3 weeks." It is a bit of a commentary on England and Germany that there is always in every German trench some one who can speak English, but jolly seldom any one in ours who can speak German—

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at any rate, any private. It's because so many Germans come over to England to be waiters and barbers, I suppose. Well, not for a long time in the future, I guess.

I get messages from the pater now and then, but there's no chance to see him.

Consider yourself well kissed.—Your loving son, TOBY

CXCVIII

RICHARD HAVEN TO NANCY HARDING

MY VERY DEAR NANCY,—I came upon these verses to-day and I at once copy them out for you, for I think they may comfort you, as they have comforted me. Let us hold firmly by what they say. I do.—Your affectionate uncle,

R. H.

[*Enclosure*]

We stand one with the men that died,
Come dawn, come dark, we have these beside;
Living or dead we are comrades all.
Our battles are won by the men that fall.

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He who died quick with his face to the foe,
In the heart of a friend must needs die slow;
Over his grave shall be heard the call,
The battle is won by the men that fall.

For a dead man leaves you work to do,
Your heart's so full that you fight for two;
And the dead man's aim is the best of all,
The battle is won by the men that fall.

O lads, dear lads, who were loyal and true,
The worst of the fight was borne by you;
So the word shall go to cottage and hall,
Our battles are won by the men that fall.

When peace dawns over the countryside,
Our thanks shall be to the lads that died.
O quiet hearts, can you hear us tell
How peace was won by the men that fell?[1]

CXCIX

Private Arthur Coleman to Ellen Frisby

Dear Miss Ellen,—Thank you for the weekly *Mirror*. There doesn't seem to be much the

[1] This poem is entitled "The Winners" and is by Mr. Laurence Housman.

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matter with Old England. Everything seems to be very much as usual with you. I sit and smoke and think about England till I can't bear myself. This is an awful country for church bells, and though they're not like ours they make me horribly home-sick. I don't mean that I go to church, but on Sunday mornings some of us usually go a walk far enough to get a drink and then back to dinner. And I don't know why, but I've been thinking of marigolds and sweet williams. The gardens here are poor affairs. And fried onions.

I've got a pal here who has no one to write to him. If you had a friend who wanted to write he would be grateful to receive her letters. But not *you*, of course. You write to me. He's a nice chap, named Alf Wilkins, and some boxer, I can tell you. A middle weight, tell your friend.

I must now stop, as it is dinner-time, and although I have no appetite one must eat to live.

God bless you, Miss Ellen.—Your admiring friend, ART

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CC

Lady Starr to Mrs. Lastways

Dear Joan,—If you want John to earn some money and grow up quickly without going into the army, now's the time. Just think of it—there's Hilda Grierson, my cousin's girl, only left school a few minutes and already earning money. If the Kaiser had never got on his hind legs she would merely be playing tennis, and staying with friends, and burrowing in *Vogue*, and all the rest of it. But now she has some clerical job at twenty-five shillings a week, eight hours a day. At the National Portrait Gallery of all places! The Gallery is closed to the public, and there she sits, with hundreds of other girls, earning her living. What a wonderful war! All around her, she says, are pictures of national highbrows, and hardly a woman among them. She has an hour for lunch, and tea on the premises, and every Thursday they hand her, in her own horrid slang, "twenty-five of the best."

I am quite sure that when the war is over she

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will want to continue to receive a salary. Won't there be some tangles to unravel then!

I was amused in London yesterday to see the posters headed "Bad Form in Dress." What an amazing people we are! Surely such a matter could be left to be discovered by ourselves. The notice at one of the theatres, "Evening dress optional but not fashionable," is much better.—Yours, HELEN

CCI

RICHARD HAVEN TO LADY STARR

MY DEAR HELEN,—Times change indeed. I was alone in a smoking carriage yesterday, on my way to the country, when at a wayside station in walked two vigorous young women in short tweed skirts.

Directly the train had started one of them pulled out a cigarette-case and they each took a cigarette. Nothing in this really, and perhaps I should not have noticed it had I not just begun to leave off tobacco myself, partly from medical

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advice, and partly from war economy. Women have smoked for years, and yet there was something new about these two girls—they were so self-reliant, so vigorous and seemingly so wholly independent of the sex to which I belong. They leaned back and smoked, without talking, and at their own station I saw them drive off in a run-about car which was waiting for them, the wheel being taken by the owner of the cigarette-case.

I have come to the conclusion that a man never feels his empire slipping from him so surely as when, all ignorant of cars, he stands by, incapable of helping, while a fragile female creature turns the crank that starts her engine. If only to preserve my respect a little longer, I must (much as I hate motors) take a few lessons in car management.—Yours, R.

CCII

Mrs. Clayton-Mills to Lady Starr

Dear Helen,—You will be pleased to hear that Archibald is at last in a most comfortable

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post, with quite a nice little salary too. He is assistant secretary to a new league for promoting Economy. Great things are expected of it, and I am sure the dear boy will be of real assistance in drawing up the programme of the suggested retrenchments, for he had to rough it terribly when he was in Paris learning to paint. I remember him telling me that he was often so hungry that he would drink the juice in an oyster shell as well as eat the oyster. Only fancy!—Yours ever,

MAUDE

CCIII

RICHARD HAVEN TO DR. SUTHERLAND

[See note to letter CLXXXVII.]

CCIV

MRS. HAVEN TO HER SISTER IN NEW ZEALAND, MRS. GLAZEBROOK

MY DEAR EMMIE,—December has again come round, and again I sit down to send you my

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annual budget of news. The war still goes on, and no one can see into the future far enough to know anything of what is to happen; but every one tries. My neighbour here, Sir Caxton Plumbe, has been saying for months that six weeks will see it through. He is quite unabashed by its persistence; and of course a time must arrive when he will be right, and then there won't be a happier man in the world. My son-in-law George Wiston doesn't believe it will ever be over at all, for he looks upon Peace with a gloomier eye even than he keeps for war: Peace being, for him, only the beginning of new hostilities. As a matter of fact, I think that secretly he likes a war to be on. It provides his natural pessimism and grievance-mongering with really big opportunities. My other civilian son-in-law, Digby Bernal, expects a sudden end through internal German troubles. Richard follows Lord Kitchener, and is prepared for three years. Helen's husband, Sir Vincent, being on the Staff, says nothing—but looks profound.

Anne is still busy over a number of war charities and in taking care of me. I hope that

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my needs in this out-of-the-way place are not keeping her from marriage, but I fear sometimes that they are and I ought to let her go where there are more men. But then, where is that? There are no men of the age she requires who are not fighting. There may be a few still avoiding it, but Anne would not look at them. And the fine young fellows that are maimed and killed! Margaret's daughter Nancy had been married only a few weeks when her husband, a nice youth from Northumberland, was killed. She is very brave about it, and has taken up a lot of responsibilities by way of occupying her thoughts; but the chances are she will not marry again, and so far as I have heard there is to be no little one. Similar cases meet one on every hand—several just round us. Kate's daughter Olive, who married Nancy's brother Dick, is, however, happy with a little boy, and Dick is still unhurt.

Joan's daughter Violet is in Paris nursing French soldiers. She sends her aunt Helen interesting letters which go the round of the family.

Anne and I had one most amazing experience,

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such as I never expected to live to see. We [Rest of paragraph excised by the Press Bureau.]

Since I wrote last the Germans have done many other terrible things too. Perhaps you heard of the sinking of the *Lusitania* and the shooting of Nurse Cavell. I never quite know what kind of things you are told so far away. In England the difficulty is to avoid hearing too many things, there are so many papers, and, since the war, so many people who know people who are in a position to know others in influential places.

Sir Caxton Plumbe is always calling in here to tell me the latest rumours. Anne reminds me of all the times he has been wrong and tells me to disregard him, but for the moment I must admit he often startles me dreadfully. This very morning, for example, he brought news of the discovery of a German mine right under the War Office. It was found out just in time. He calls all these things the work of the Unseen Hand, which he says is everywhere, and will be until Lord Haldane is interned! It seems that Lord Haldane dug this mine himself in his spare time when he was War Secretary! But I don't believe

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it. I have seen his portrait. Still, that's the way they talk.

If you have not heard, dear Emmie, let me tell you that the German disregard of decency and truth and humanity still goes on. It is all very strange to me who remember so many Germans in Berlin and Heidelberg and other places when on my wedding tour, and all of them, although not quite as we should like them, especially at table, apparently warm-hearted and honourable. I remember one German gentleman, I think he was a Professor, who was most charming with a cage of little birds. To-day, were he living, which is hardly likely though, for he was an elderly man then, he would, I suppose, be applauding his countrymen's wickedness. Even the pastors call for the destruction of England. The only two pastors that I met were on a walking tour, and were only too glad of the shelter of our carriage in a thunderstorm in some wild part of Saxony. They were so placid and bovine and far too hot; but quite amiable. And to think of the Germans to-day!

Everything is getting more expensive here, and my poor income is being reduced every day by

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income tax and so forth. But I think of the soldiers fighting, and don't complain.

Well, dear Emmie, I must now close.—Your loving sister, VICTORIA

CCV

VIOLET LASTWAYS TO LADY STARR

DEAR AUNT HELEN,—There has been a very strange case here—a splendid French officer, very tall and dark and handsome, who had been in terrible pain for days and the doctors couldn't find out what was the matter with him. He was so strong that it took three or four orderlies and nurses to hold him in bed when his paroxysms came on. Well, he was getting so much worse that his people were sent for, but when they came nothing could induce them to see him. Isn't that extraordinary? They could not stand the idea of death, or even of such illness as that, and there they all stood in the passage, crying, and now and then one would peep through the door at him. But they daren't go in, although he was

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quite conscious and longed to see somebody he knew. I did all I could to overcome their reluctance, but it was no use.

He died yesterday, and now the doctors have found that all the time he had a bullet right in his heart, but he was so strong that it took that long time to kill him. I never saw such a handsome man.

How different people can be! Some of the men here have relations who are continually trying to get in to see them, and sit about for hours waiting. And then there are the poor old peasant fathers and mothers who come in from the country and never can be made to understand, bless their dear simple hearts, that their sons are far too ill to eat the things they bring for them. Indeed, it is only when a soldier is probably going to die that his people are sent for at all. They dress so quaintly, and have such sweet apple complexions, and the old men have cross lines on their necks just like crocodile leather, and they carry bulging string-bags. And the old women cry and the old men try to be practical and full of common sense and philosophy, but you can see

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that they're all equally dazed and outraged by it all. And then they are so lost when it is time to go. They have no idea where to stay and they don't want to leave Paris till the end. There ought to be a society to provide them with lodgings, but poor France has no time for that.

One of our sights for visitors here is a dog. A real dog, not a toutou or a loulou, but a great collie kind of thing. This belongs to one of our wounded men, and it went to the front with him. One day a shell buried him, together with another soldier and the dog. The dog was only lightly covered and scrambled out, and then it began to dig out its master and the other soldier—but its master first—and but for the dog they would have died. So now it is a hero, and all our rules are broken by its presence here, and twice a day it is allowed to visit its master.

I suppose you know that dogs have been trained to find the wounded, and it is perfectly sweet, I was told, to see how gentle they are with them. The darlings!—Your loving VI.

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CCVI

Mrs. Clayton-Mills to Mrs. Wiston

My dear Kate,—Poor Archibald has had to give up his fine work for the Economy League. He was doing so well there, although, of course, to one so artistic as he is, the office routine was very uncongenial; but still he stuck to it, in his great keenness to help at this critical time. And then came the news of Lord Upperton's death at the front, and this completely unstrung the boy. You see Archibald and Lord Upperton were contemporaries at Eton, and the blow was a very severe one, even although they had not met since. Archibald has now gone to Scotland in the hope of forgetting his loss.

This war is relentless. It reaches every one sooner or later.—Your affectionate Maude

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CCVII

Richard Haven to Barclay Vaughan

Dear B.,—It is New Year's Day, and that makes one think a little: at least, if one strayed, as I did last night, to St. Paul's churchyard, and saw how the strange frivolous crowd there, chiefly young soldiers with their arms round giggling girls, suddenly hushed as the clock began to strike the hour which brought in this 1916. For, with all contempt for anniversaries, it is not possible to be present in a crowd at such a moment without a consciousness of something fateful happening. A year is dead: what did we in it? A new year has begun: what has it in store for us? Shall we even be still alive in twelve months' time, or cold and buried and out of it all? That is a steadying and serious enough poser anyway; for we are all like the old studio-cleaner in a beaded black bonnet whom I met last week at a party for Belgian refugee children, who explained her presence there by the confession, "I love life."

But whether or not we make one at any form

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of watch-night gathering, this year everything is different. This is a New Year's Day indeed! This may be the beginning of the most tremendous New Year in all our experience.

All the work of the war has not been deadly, by any means. We owe to it already a new England and a much finer England than any living eyes have seen. War can be, and often is, as horrible as it is painted, even by the most powerful and sinister brushes; indeed, it is more horrible than that, as soldiers will refuse to tell you. But war is a purifier, too, and an ennobler. War and adversity bind men together, where peace and prosperity can isolate them in self-indulgence. War—and such a war as this—sets before every one the problem, "What can I do for my country?" and insists on an answer; whereas during peace there is no compulsory question-time. That is why war is good: it can be the surgical operation which restores health—only, alas! as a medical friend of mine pointed out when I used the simile to him, there is no anæsthetic! Every Englishman who has died or has been maimed in this conflict has suffered not merely to stem the tide

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of German aggression, but to help towards the rebuilding of England. And one can say the same of the French and Russian victims, too; they are saviours of their country in a double sense. Every man still active in service is lifting his country's banner a few inches higher.

The loss of our men is irreparable. Splendid young men cut down in their glory. Nothing can bring them back, and we shall always be the poorer for them. But that apart, the war has been a wonderful thing for us. It has revealed new depths of fineness in so many people, given so many people their chance, brought out qualities of sympathy and kindliness that might have fossilised. I have met many bereaved parents and relatives—far too many—and they have shown their grief in differing ways; but all have made one remark in common. All have used to me some such words as these—"How extraordinarily kind people are!"

And another thing the war has done for us is to cut down luxury. And even more do I thank it for giving women their opportunity. This they

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have too long waited for, but now it has come they have most admirably risen to it.

But most of all one looks to this war to end war—not, of course, for ever—for we are not ready for such advance as that yet—but for many years. For our time at any rate.

If only we can remember—all of us—the wickednesses that this war has seen; if only the wanton destructivenesses and the cruelties to which ambition leads can never be lost sight of; only then, out of realisation of them and amazement at them, should come a new and wiser era. There must be, at this date in the world's history, some saner arbitrament than machine guns, liquid fire, and poisoned gas, or let the curtain fall; let the earth become as tenantless as the moon!

If every man who has fallen has brought a wiser, humaner future nearer, he has not fallen in vain. If parents can feel that their sons fell to this end, their grief may be turned almost to joy.—

Yours, R. H.

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CCVIII

Toby Starr to Portia Grey

I am going to be very bold and call you Dear Portia!

Are you very cross with me? As I always think of you as Portia, I may as well write it, don't you think? So, dear Portia, this is just a brief note to say that I am out of the trenches for a few days and so far have not had even a scratch. This is glorious luck, and I ought to touch wood when I write it. I put it all down to carrying your photograph about with me. Isn't that splendid? That's all for to-day.—Yours very sincerely, Toby Starr

P.S.—I wonder if you ever think of me as Toby?

CCIX

Lady Starr to Richard Haven

My dear Richard,—Thank Heaven all goes well with Toby, but a letter from his colonel has

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given me a fright. It seems that the other day he was sitting in his dug-out, apparently writing home, when a shell exploded close by. It did not hurt him, but it seems to have blown a photograph —mine, I suppose—that he must have had on his knee, or perhaps in his letter pad, on to the open ground above the trench, and the foolish head-strong creature must needs start at once to retrieve it. Fortunately there is a sergeant there who has a way with him, and he absolutely refused to let the boy go—indeed, pulled him forcibly back and more or less sat on him till nightfall, when they went for it together and found it, still at the risk of their lives, with a pocket torch. But there's a darling son for you! The colonel pledged me not to say anything about it. He says that Toby is wonderful in spirits and pluck, and his men would follow him anywhere; which is good hearing for a mother. God send him safely home to me!

Some day I suppose he will fall in love and I shall lose him; but so far there seems to be no one, thank goodness!—Yours, HELEN

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CCX

Richard Haven to Dr. Sutherland

Dear Sutherland,—You would find, if you came over, that fatalism is largely on the increase in this country, and how can you wonder? Even simple trustful souls like my mother seem to have given up their ancient belief in a personal Caretaker. "It's all very terrible and wicked and beyond all comprehension," has become their half-dazed attitude. "But what will be, will be." It is not the war alone that has done it, but in particular the Zeppelins. All their lives these credulous hopeful people have been looking *up* for blessings; and now the sky has played them false, and instead of heaven's gentle dews come inflammatory and explosive bombs, discharged by fellow-creatures.

By the way, what amazing recollections some of the Germans who survive will carry down to old age. Fancy the old fellows sitting in their arm-chairs (or, more probably, armed chairs) with their innocent grandchildren around their knees,

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telling proudly about dropping bombs on London from Zeppelins; hiding bombs in the form of pieces of coal packed with high explosives in the bunkers of the *Bulwark* and other ships; sinking the *Lusitania;* setting fire to the Canadian Houses of Parliament; shooting Miss Cavell! And the strange thing is that, on the plea that might is right, and the advancement of one's country comes before all, and soldiers and sailors must obey orders, these deeds are probably leaving no scar on the conscience.

Nothing can get decency into some people. If ever there was a time for not spending much money on theatrical enterprises, but letting the authors and the performers do the entertaining, it is now. And many managers with a sense of decency know this. But in other quarters the same desperate competition in lavish display goes on. The excuse is, of course, that our soldiers like it; but my experience is that our soldiers are equally happy, if not more so, where there is less spectacle and more fun. At a recent first night I was told the flowers handed over the footlights must have cost hundreds of pounds. Some day

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we shall have to take decency in hand and try and teach it in schools, and then perhaps, during a terrible national crisis such as this, a grain or two of it may get even into the stage-struck; or, if not, some actress of the better kind may issue a notice stating that no flowers are to be given her at all, but if her admirers have so much cash to spare they can apply it to some worthy end, suggested by herself. Is that too fantastically Utopian a notion?

Now that conscription has come in, the mysteries of life have been increased by one tremendous one—How do so many apparently eligible men escape? I see on all sides young fellows with exemptions. They ought to have placards on them explaining why.

What weather we are having! Poor human nature—not much is done for it. It makes me blush to see how pathetically happy people can be just because the sun comes out; and we surely are entitled to that. There are two things which no one who has not a very robust faith should ever permit himself to see. One is a ruined

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hay crop. The other is his fellow-bathers in a Turkish bath.—Yours, R. H.

CCXI

Mrs. Park-Stanmer to Lady Starr

My Dear,—I have had such an extraordinary adventure. When I was in London last week I went to the Palace, and I noticed that a tall man in uniform was looking my way a good deal. Still, I didn't think anything of it, so many men look at me. I ought to say I was wearing a rather striking green Chinese wrap with purple and red embroidery. Well, what do you think? On the next morning but one, in the Personal Column of the *Times*, I read this:

"Palace Theatre, Monday night. You were wearing a green shawl with flowers worked on it and you looked more than once at officer in uniform same row of stalls. Please comfort him by writing to Box 36."

I have of course heard of this kind of thing happening to other women, but I never expected

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it for myself, and it's a mercy that Horace never notices what I am wearing or he might be suspicious.

At first I didn't mean to reply, but then I thought how cruel that would be, with this poor lonely fellow on leave, and perhaps without a friend in London, so I wrote very discreetly, and to-day his answer has come imploring me to meet him in town to-morrow. Of course I shan't go, but isn't it romantic? I can't think what there is about me that so marks me out.—Your devoted AMABEL

CCXII

MRS. CLAYTON-MILLS TO MRS. WISTON

DEAR KATE,—We are in great distress. Dear Archibald, as you know, ever since the beginning of the war, has been anxious to do his bit, and visited our medical man on the subject more than once, but was always assured by him that he was not fitted to be a soldier. And now that conscription has come in the military doctor pretends

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that there is nothing the matter with him, and he must join up. This is, of course, ridiculous, for the poor boy is far from strong, as I, being his mother, know. I have told the doctor this, but he won't believe me, and, in fact, has been very brusque about it. The drill and fatiguing life will, I am sure, be fatal, and I am distracted at the thought, while Archibald has become moody and nervy and anything but his usual gay self. Do advise me what to do? Mr. Haven was not very kind to Archibald when we approached him. Do you think your sister's husband, Sir Vincent Starr, could do anything? Or ought I to present a petition to the King? Apart from Archibald's inherent weakness, have they any right to take a widow's only son?—Yours in great distress,

MAUDE

CCXIII

VIOLET LASTWAYS TO MRS. LASTWAYS

DEAR MOTHER,—I had such a treat yesterday, for who should suddenly appear at the hospital

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but Uncle Vincent, in Paris for a day or two, and he took me out to dinner, and told me such news of you all as Aunt Helen had sent him. Toby seems to be a great success as a soldier, and Uncle Vincent now wants him to stick to the army as a profession, as he is certain of promotion directly. We went to a favourite restaurant of Uncle Vincent's, but it was very sad. Nearly every one he knew had gone to the war. "Where is Xavier?" he asked. They said he was fighting and had not been heard of for some time. "Where is the vestiaire with the red hair?" "Il est blessé." "Where is the sommelier?" "Il est mort."

The streets are full of black, too. I feel so sorry for them all.

I saw Uncle Vincent off, and we watched a train full of soldiers go off first. The wives and mothers and sweethearts were so different from those one used to see at Waterloo. There a kind of desperate high spirits was the thing, I remember; but of course it may be different now. And not a few of the poor things had been drinking. But the women here are so quiet and determined,

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and they all have something sensible for the soldier to take with him—a bundle of things to eat, fruit and so forth, and it is so funny to see every man with a yard or so of bread to munch in the train. It isn't till the train has gone that the women cry.

The soldiers are so philosophic too—in that kind of fatalistic way that one sees everywhere over here now. Sometimes they get to the station, after their few days' leave, only to find that the train can't start for two or three hours. But having made all their preparations to go then they accept the delay and settle down quite naturally on the steps and the floor, in little groups, eating, talking, playing cards. French soldiers seem to be able to play cards anywhere.

There has been tremendous excitement here to-day because Dubosc, the funniest of the men in my ward, whose leg was shot away, has got a new one. It came this morning—a wooden one —and Dubosc has been as proud as a dog with two tails and has made a complete tour of the hospital to show it off. I wish a movie picture could be taken of him, so that the kind Americans

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who subscribed for the leg (one of a great consignment) might see his joy.—Your loving

VI.

CCXIV

George Wiston to Richard Haven

Dear Richard,—I suppose that in a sense we are nearer the end of the war; but what good will that do us! Look at our expenditure. Look at our losses. And then think of the problems that must follow, whatever peace we have, whether a sound one or only a patched-up one. To begin with, we shall have some disgusting Mafficking. That, however, is secondary. After that there will be a period of intense depression, during which the great mass of people are realising to their surprise and mortification that the millennium is not instant. Then there will be the gradual disbanding of a large part of the army, and the reluctance or inability of the men who have tasted blood, so to speak, to resume their old tame lives. These will have to be dealt

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with, as well as the women, the substitutes for the more amenable ones, thrown thus out of employment. And all the while a very high rate of taxation will have to be maintained, for normal expenditure cannot return for years and years.

Among other troubles for Parliament will be Ireland and the Insurance Act. No, it is not the declaration of Peace that is going to smooth our pillows.

I am saying all this in a letter to the papers signed "Sombre Avenir."—Yours cordially,

GEORGE WISTON

CCXV

MRS. PARK-STANMER TO LADY STARR

DEAR HELEN,—I went to London after all, as it seemed only kindness to do so, but I wish I hadn't. He was a most frightening man, and I have been all shaken with nervousness ever since. Not a gentleman at all. I assure you I was quite glad to get back to dear old Horace, who really has been rather nice lately and has

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given me the loveliest fur coat. I am thinking seriously of taking up my music again.—Yours ever, AMABEL

CCXVI

RICHARD HAVEN TO BARCLAY VAUGHAN

MY DEAR BARCLAY,—To-day I had, in common with millions of others, the newspaper shock of my life. Turning, just after lunch, from a byway into a highway, I met a boy with the placard:

DEATH OF
LORD KITCHENER

What a blow! The word Death on a placard, even now, when the scythe has been changed to a mowing machine, is always startling. But the death of that man—that new personification of England's dogged spirit and, as I choose to believe, inevitability!

For it is wonderful how Lord Kitchener had changed, in the public mind, from the stern, aloof

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symbol of military caste to the father of his country. Recent portraits had shown him ageing very graciously, with a suggestion of the citizen in his increasing bulk, and often a smile.

Well, his work was largely done, for his new armies are in being. No one else could have got them. But one would have wished for him so easy a declining day among his little bits of Ming in his Kentish retreat.

As it is, what a fine death! It is given to few Secretaries for War to die like soldiers. I hope the body will not be recovered. I like to think of him with the whole ocean for his grave, and no undertakers or descriptive writers intervening. And that reminds me that to-morrow will provide the delectable spectacle of those papers who lost no opportunity overtly or covertly of belittling the great man, doing all they can to persuade their readers that they did nothing of the kind.

Meanwhile things will go on towards our victory with the same steadiness: for with all her superficial faults England is a very great country. She is full of the stuff.—Yours, R. H.

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CCXVII

Richard Haven to Dr. Sutherland

My dear Sutherland,—Have you noticed —but of course you have—how we grow into knowledge? Every year of life brings its discoveries; and it is never time to die. Even if you lived to be a hundred you would still be deficient in information: you would not know how things struck you at a hundred and one. On the other hand, I believe that by the time a man is five-and-forty he has thought all his best thoughts. After that he merely thinks them again, revises them, or—and that is the tragedy —cools them.

Personally, I don't want to die for three or four years after Peace is declared and the world has had a chance to recover. We shall all be wanted then; and especially those of us who have memories, to remind those who have not—whose passion is to forget and forgive—of the monstrous things that Germany has done. It is this tolerant school of which I am afraid; for if they get their

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way, the whole trouble will begin over again. Snakes must be killed, not scotched.

I heard an odd thing to-day. I met Crossthwaite the publisher, and he told me that in the need for copper there is quite a good price for engraved plates, and theirs have been weeded out for the munitioners. A source of revenue which had never been contemplated! Among those which had been despatched to Mr. Lloyd George's merry men and maidens were those of a huge illustrated Bible which his firm brought out years ago. There seems to be some irony here. The Bible has often, in the stories, stopped the bullet; but it now supplies it.—Yours, R. H.

CCXVIII

Mrs. Clayton-Mills to Mrs. Wiston

Dear Kate,—My troubles for the moment are over—in a most curious and, I am sure, providential way. I will tell you about it.

Last evening I had a terrible shock. I was sitting at the window, writing to Archibald, when

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I saw an ambulance drive up to the door. My heart stood still. Archibald is dead! I said to myself. Although unable to bear the sight, I watched them bear out a body and carry it into the house. How I got downstairs I cannot say, but I found myself in the hall somehow, and steeled myself to hear the worst, when all my grief was turned to joy, for it seems that the poor boy had sprained his ankle at his very last game of golf before he joined up, and now he can't begin for I don't know how long. He is very brave about it, although bitterly disappointed, for, all unknown to me, he had set his heart on being a soldier, and was really keen to make a start and rise to a high rank. Directly he can move about at all I shall take him to Cornwall.—Your greatly relieved

MAUDE

CCXIX

VIOLET LASTWAYS TO LADY STARR

DEAR AUNT HELEN,—As I have time, let me tell you about a boy who was in my ward here

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and is now réformé. He is in a civil job in Paris, but he comes out to see us pretty often, and always brings me a bunch of flowers, although I am sure he has little enough money. By trade he is a plumber, but you can't plumb with only one arm, so now he has become a messenger. Charles is only twenty-two, and he is very shy and quiet, but his eyes follow you all the time. They have very big black pupils. He told me all about losing his arm, which was like this. At the front he was a despatch bearer. A despatch—a *pli*, as they call it—would be given him either back of the lines to deliver in the trenches, or in the trenches to deliver back of the lines, and in order to get there, if fighting was in progress, it was necessary for him to crawl for perhaps one or two kilometres on his stomach. On a certain day of heavy fighting, Charles, in his trench, was handed a *pli* for the commanding officer, who was a kilometre or so behind, and this he placed in his satchel and then began the terrible journey.

This being a terrific day—as a matter of fact it was during the famous battle of the Maison du Passeur, when the French and Germans were

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losing and retaking trenches for hours—there was so much firing that he had to crawl all the way, and as he did so he came suddenly upon the body of the commanding officer dead in a carrot-field.

To Charles's mind there was then only one thing to do, and that was, as he had been unable to deliver the message, to take it back to the sender. He therefore started on the return journey, and was only a few yards from his trench, and still had not been hit, when he found a wounded officer on the ground. Standing up and throwing aside all precautions, Charles got him as well as he could on his back, and half-carried, half-supported him to the trench, and was at once away again with his despatch. It was at this moment that an exploding shell hurled the satchel from his hands and flung it on the open ground between the French trenches and the enemy's, which were separated only by a few yards. Charles knew that at any cost the despatch must be prevented from falling into German hands, and so he got out of the trench to bring

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it back, and while he was returning with it a shell broke his arm to pieces.

That is all he remembers; but he must have rolled back to the bottom of the trench, where he was found, two days later, still clutching the satchel. And after that, although he remembers the coffee he was given to drink, all is a haze until he came fully to himself in hospital and found that he no longer had a right arm.

He was a long time getting well, and then he was sent for to the Invalides and was given both the Medaille Militaire and the Croix de Guerre.

Naturally he is very proud of them, although he is so shy; but there is a drop of bitter in his cup, apart altogether from his lost arm, and that really is the point of this long story. For, being now a civilian again, he has to wear civilian clothes, and this means that when, in the street, another soldier, even General Joffre himself, sees his medals and salutes him, as every officer is proud to do, poor Charles may not salute back. It is this that hurts him most!—Your loving

VI.

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CCXX

Toby Starr to Portia Grey

[*Telegram*]

Have short leave. Expect me Thursday.

Starr

CCXXI

Lady Starr to Richard Haven

My dear Richard,—Alas! I am a very foolish woman. That was not my photograph at all that Toby wanted to risk his life in retrieving. It was a photograph of a Miss Portia Grey, and the boy is head over heels in love with her, and I must confess that I like her too. It seems that they met over a foolish Lonely Sub advertisement he put in the *Times* for a joke and then repented of, but the minx had written to him and the mischief was done. Her father is Lucius Grey, the artist, who paints those quaint pre-Raphaelite things. Of course they won't marry yet, and Vincent will

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have something to say about it too; but I see the Finger of Fate.

My Toby has gone for ever. The new Toby (judging by the few glimpses I got of him during his seventy-two hours) is much bigger and broader, and he has a fine confident look, and a really respectable moustache, and a quiet assured smile underneath it. I suppose I stand somewhere in his affections, but he so obviously belongs to the Portia person that I must begin to accept the inevitable and cultivate those arts which assuage the pangs of childlessness. As a matter of fact, I am so glad that Portia is nice that really I am more philosophic than I sound. These things have to be. But it is badly managed: just when one's children reach the age when they might be not only companions but props, they fall to strangers.

He expressed himself as grieved not to have a minute for you. You see, the girl lives at Ashford, and seeing her, fixing things up with her pre-Raphaelite father, and bringing her here and taking her back again, on that railway, filled his leave.

Such is life.—Yours, HELEN

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CCXXII

Richard Haven to Lady Starr

My dear Helen,—Your news is amusing and welcome. I am continually hearing of parents who are quite certain that their children's hearts are free and who are invariably wrong. Were I a father I am sure I should never be so blundering. But it is good news. Let all young people marry, say I, for even if they make a mistake they will have had a little pure happiness *en route* to the awakening; and, since man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, that is a great thing.

Toby, however, is of the simpler kind and should be happy much longer, if not for ever. Of Portia I know nothing, but guess her to be all right: that is to say, his sort.

Please the Sisters who spin the web of our destiny, and do it often so ill, that he comes through this barbarous business to hold her in his arms and some day be surrounded by little twinkling Starrs of greater and lesser magnitude!

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There cannot be too many children. And if you can lure his enchantress to London I will give you both a pre-war lunch, and I am sure I am entitled to one such orgy, having smoked no cigars nor drunk any wine for months. Across the table shall I get to know her.

I heard an incredible thing to-day from little Harry Lancaster. You know that Brighton is a great place for wounded soldiers—in fact their blue uniform has given a new colour to the promenade there. Well, it seems that among the gilt-edged visitors to Brighton lately was one man who thought it a great mistake that in a town such as Brighton, where people go to be happy, wounded men should be allowed! This is a positive fact. Harry, I am glad to say, was there to answer him fittingly. And what an attitude to the war it displays, and how far some people, in this the ending of the second year, still are from appreciating what is really happening and how grateful we ought to be to these same promenade kill-joys! By the way, I wonder what are the feelings of the conscientious objector as he gazes upon these poor but cheery one-legged and

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one-armed and blinded soldiers. I do not envy him his exclusion from any community with them.—Yours, R.

CCXXIII

Mrs. Haven to Mrs. Lastways

My dear Joan,—What do you think? Ellen, the silly girl, has engaged herself to a prisoner in Holland to whom she has been writing. I think women have gone mad. The very idea of a soldier seems to turn their heads, and this is a man that Ellen has never seen. I am very cross with her.

We had to have "Hi, Sir," our poor dachshund, put away this morning. He has been getting more and more blind, and that made him snappy and dangerous, so we sent him to the vet. Tipper took him and brought back the news: "He went off like a snuff." I was thinking about it all yesterday, after we decided, and most of the night. It seems so awful to arrange for the death of any living thing.

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I hope you have got good news of Violet.—
Your loving MOTHER

CCXXIV

RICHARD HAVEN TO BARCLAY VAUGHAN

MY DEAR B.,—My nephew Toby Starr, who is a second lieutenant at the Front, has sent me an astonishing chorus, or litany, or what you will, that the men are singing. The Germans hear them, of course, but I doubt if it is sent across No Man's Land as an intimation of our own eventual bliss and the Germans' certain loss of it. I should guess not. That is not the British soldier's way, his heart being far more in conquering the enemy than in criticising him. Indeed, I find such men from the Front as I chance to meet very loth to talk about the Hun at all and rarely voluble as to his iniquities. Rather do they emphasise his merits as a fighter.

I should guess that this odd triumphant credo, set to an old music-hall tune and springing up and spreading probably as mysteriously as a folk-

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song, is not a defiance of the earthly foe, but merely one more manifestation of the courageous levity that this war has drawn forth. It is Tommy's light surface way of accepting death. To do even so tremendous a thing as that without a touch of humour would not be playing the game. We get therefore trench after trench filled with men who at any moment may be blown to atoms singing these astonishing words:

The Bells of Hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling
For you but not for me.
For me the angels sing-a-ling-a-ling
They've got the goods for me.
O Death, where is thy sting-a-ling-a-ling?
O Grave, thy victoree?
The Bells of Hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling
For you but not for me!

Isn't that wonderful? and incredible? It is not exactly religion, and yet it is religion. Fatalism with faith. Assurance with disdain. The very aristocracy of confidence. And only the new British soldier could sing it.

But, I say, what material! I believe that the singing soldier is always to be dreaded, but when he sings things like that . . . !

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So the Great Push has come at last! May it succeed and bring the end of all this monstrous stupidity nearer! Early in the war a French artist, *mobilisé*, speaking of the British troops, said to me that they knew better how to die than how to kill. I fancy this is no longer true. Much has intervened since then to steel their kind hearts.

Even as I write, my nephew is in it—and may be out of it. Any moment may bring his mother the War Office telegram which so many homes are so constantly dreading. Yet somehow I feel that he will come through.—Yours, R. H.

CCXXV

Lieut.-Col. Morton to Lady Starr

[*Telegram*]

Toby recommended for V.C. Many congratulations. Sending full particulars.

Morton

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